

that suffering, some time or other and in some shape or other, this only can enable any man to depict it in others. All over him, Hawthorne's melancholy rests like an Indian-summer, which, though bathing a whole country in one softness, still reveals the distinctive hue of every towering hill and each winding vale.

But it is the least part of genius that attracts admiration. Here Hawthorne is known, he seems to be deemed a pleasant writer, with a pleasant style,—a sequestered, harmless man, from whom any deep and weighty thing would hardly be anticipated—a man who means no meanings. But there is no man, in whom humor and love, like mountain peaks, soar to such a rapt height as to receive the irradiations of the upper zones,—there is no man in whom humor and love are developed in that high form called genius, no such man can exist without also possessing, as the indispensable complement of these, a great, deep intellect, which drops down into the universe like a plummet. Or, love and humor are only the eyes through which such an intellect views the world. The great beauty in such a mind is but the product of its strength. What, then, all readers, can be more charming than the piece entitled "Monsieur du Miroir," and to a reader at all capable of fully comprehending it, what, at the same time, can possess more mystical depth of meaning?—yes, there he sits and looks at me,—this "shape of mystery," this "identical Monsieur du Miroir." "Methinks I should tremble now, were his wizard power of gliding through all impediments in search of me, to place him suddenly before my eyes."

How profound, nay appalling, is the moral evolved by the "Earth's Holocaust," where—beginning with the hollow follies and affectations of the world,—all vanities and empty theories and forms are, one after another, and by an admirably graduated, growing comprehensiveness, thrown into the allegorical fire, till, at length, nothing is left but the all-engendering heart of man, which remaining still unconsumed, the great conflagration is naught.

Of a piece with this, is the "Intelligence Office," a wondrous symbolizing of the secret workings in men's souls. There are

other sketches still more charged with ponderous import

"The Christmas Banquet," and "The Bosom Serpent," would be fine subjects for a curious and elaborate analysis, touching the conjectural parts of the mind that produced them. For in spite of all the Indian-summer sunlight on the hither side of Hawthorne's soul, the other side—like the dark half of the physical sphere—is shrouded in a blackness, ten times black. But this darkness but gives more effect to the ever-moving dawn, that for ever advances through it, and circumnavigates his world. Whether Hawthorne has simply availed himself of this mystical blackness as a means to the wondrous effects he makes it to produce in his lights and shades, or whether there really lurks in him, perhaps unknown to himself, a touch of Puritanic gloom,—this, I cannot altogether tell. Certain it is, however, that this great power of blackness in him derives its force from its appeals to that Calvinistic sense of Innate Depravity and Original Sin, from whose visitations, in some shape or other, no deeply thinking mind is always and wholly free. For, in certain moods, no man can weigh this world without throwing in something, somehow like Original Sin, to strike the uneven balance. At all events, perhaps no writer has ever wielded this terrific thought with greater terror than this same harmless Hawthorne. Still more this black conceit pervades him through and through. You may be witched by his sunlight,—transported by the bright gildings in the skies he builds over you, but there is the blackness of darkness beyond, and even his bright gildings but fringe and play upon the edges of thunder-clouds. In one word, the world is mistaken in this Nathaniel Hawthorne. He himself must often have smiled at its absurd misconception of him. He is immeasurably deeper than the plummet of the mere critic. For it is not the brain that can test such a man; it is only the heart. You cannot come to know greatness by inspecting it, there is no glimpse to be caught of it, except by intuition, you need not ring it, you but touch it, and you find it is gold.

Now, it is that blackness in Hawthorne, of which I have spoken, that so fixes and fascinates me. It may be, neverthe-

less, that it is too largely developed in him. Perhaps he does not give us a ray of his light for every shade of his dark. But however this may be, this blackness it is that furnishes the infinite obscure of his back-ground,—that back-ground, against which Shakespeare plays his grandest conceits, the things that have made for Shakespeare his loftiest but most circumscribed renown, as the profoundest of thinkers. For by philosophers Shakespeare is not adored as the great man of tragedy and comedy—"Off with his head, so much for Buckingham!" This sort of rant, interlined by another hand, brings down the house,—those mistaken souls, who dream of Shakespeare as a mere man of Richard-the-Third humps and Macbeth daggers. But it is those deep far-away things in him, those occasional flashings-forth of the intuitive Truth in him, those short, quick probings at the very axis of reality,—these are the things that make Shakespeare, Shakespeare. Through the mouths of the dark characters of Hamlet, Timon, Lear, and Iago, he craftily says, or sometimes insinuates the things which we feel to be so terrifically true, that it were all but madness for any good man, in his own proper character, to utter, or even hint of them. Tormented into desperation, Lear, the frantic king, tears off the mask, and speaks the same madness of vital truth. But, as I before said, it is the least part of genius that attracts admiration. And so, much of the blind, unbridled admiration that has been heaped upon Shakespeare, has been lavished upon the least part of him. And few of his endless commentators and critics seem to have remembered, or even perceived, that the immediate products of a great mind are not so great as that undeveloped and sometimes undevlopable yet dimly-discriminable greatness, to which those immediate products are but the infallible indices. In Shakespeare's tomb lies infinitely more than Shakespeare ever wrote. And if I magnify Shakespeare, it is not so much for what he did do as for what he did not do, or refrained from doing. For in this world of lies, Truth is forced to fly like a scared white doe in the woodlands, and only by cunning glimpses will she reveal herself, as in Shakespeare and

other masters of the great Art of Telling the Truth,—even though it be covertly and by snatches

But if this view of the all-popular Shakespeare be seldom taken by his readers, and if very few who extol him have ever read him deeply, or perhaps, only have seen him on the tricky stage (which alone made, and is still making him his mere mob renown)—if few men have time, or patience, or palate, for the spiritual truth as it is in that great genius,—it is then no matter of surprise, that in a contemporaneous age, Nathaniel Hawthorne is a man as yet almost utterly mistaken among men. Here and there, in some quiet arm-chair in the noisy town, or some deep nook among the noiseless mountains, he may be appreciated for something of what he is. But unlike Shakespeare, who was forced to the contrary course by circumstances, Hawthorne (either from simple disinclination, or else from inaptitude) refrains from all the popularizing noise and show of broad farce and blood-be-smeared tragedy, content with the still, rich utterance of a great intellect in repose, and which sends few thoughts into circulation, except they be arterialized at his large warm lungs, and expanded in his honest heart.

Nor need you fix upon that blackness in him, if it suit you not. Nor, indeed, will all readers discern it, for it is, mostly, insinuated to those who may best understand it, and account for it, it is not obtruded upon every one alike.

Some may start to read of Shakespeare and Hawthorne on the same page. They may say, that if an illustration were needed, a lesser light might have sufficed to elucidate this Hawthorne, this small man of yesterday. But I am not willingly one of those who, as touching Shakespeare at least, exemplify the maxim of Rochefoucauld, that "we exalt the reputation of some, in order to depress that of others",—who, to teach all noble-souled aspirants that there is no hope for them, pronounce Shakespeare absolutely unapproachable. But Shakespeare has been approached. There are minds that have gone as far as Shakespeare into the universe. And hardly a mortal man, who, at some time or other, has not felt as great thoughts in him as any you will find in Hamlet. We must

not inferentially malign mankind for the sake of any one man, whoever he may be This is too cheap a purchase of contentment for conscious mediocrity to make Besides, this absolute and unconditional adoration of Shakespeare has grown to be a part of our Anglo-Saxon superstitions The Thirty-Nine Articles are now Forty Intolerance has come to exist in this matter You must believe in Shakespeare's unapproachability, or quit the country But what sort of a belief is this for an American, a man who is bound to carry republican progressiveness into Literature as well as into Life? Believe me, my friends, that men, not very much inferior to Shakespeare, are this day being born on the banks of the Ohio And the day will come when you shall say, Who reads a book by an Englishman that is a modern? The great mistake seems to be, that even with those Americans who look forward to the coming of a great literary genius among us, they somehow fancy he will come in the costume of Queen Elizabeth's day, be a writer of dramas founded upon old English history or the tales of Boccaccio Whereas, great geniuses are parts of the times, they themselves are the times, and possess a correspondent coloring It is of a piece with the Jews, who, while their Shiloh was meekly walking in their streets, were still praying for his magnificent coming, looking for him in a chariot, who was already among them on an ass Nor must we forget that, in his own lifetime Shakespeare was of the shrewd, thriving business firm of Condell, Shakespeare & Co , proprietors of the Globe Theatre in London; and by a courtly author^r, of the name of Chettle, was looked at as an "upstart crow," beautified "with other birds' feathers" For, mark it well, imitation is often the first charge brought against real originality Why this is so, there is not space to set forth here You must have plenty of sea-room to tell the Truth in, especially when it seems to have an aspect of newness, as America did in 1492, though it was then just as old, and perhaps older than Asia, only those sagacious philosophers, the common sailors, had never seen it before, swearing it was all water and moonshine there

Now I do not say that Nathaniel of Salem is a greater than

Wilham of Avon, or as great. But the difference between the two men is by no means immeasurable Not a very great deal more, and Nathaniel were verily William

This, too, I mean, that if Shakespeare has not been equalled, give the world time, and he is sure to be surpassed, in one hemisphere or the other Nor will it at all do to say, that the world is getting grey and grizzled now, and has lost that fresh charm which she wore of old, and by virtue of which the great poets of past times made themselves what we esteem them to be Not so The world is as young to-day as when it was created, and this Vermont morning dew is as wet to my feet, as Eden's dew to Adam's Nor has nature been all over ransacked by our progenitors, so that no new charms and mysteries remain for this latter generation to find Far from it The trillionth part has not yet been said, and all that has been said, but multiplies the avenues to what remains to be said It is not so much paucity as superabundance of material that seems to incapacitate modern authors

Let America, then, prize and cherish her writers, yea, let her glorify them They are not so many in number as to exhaust her good-will And while she has good kith and kin of her own, to take to her bosom, let her not lavish her embraces upon the household of an alien For believe it or not, England, after all, is in many things alien to us China has more bonds of real love for us than she But even were there no strong literary individualities among us, as there are some dozens at least, nevertheless, let America first praise mediocritv even, in her own children, before she praises (for every-where, merit demands acknowledgment from every one) the best excellence in the children of any other land Let her own authors, I say, have the priority of appreciation I was much pleased with a hot-headed Carolina cousin of mine, who once said,—“If there were no other American to stand by, in literature, why, then, I would stand by Pop Emmons and his ‘Fredoniad,’ and till a better epic came along, swear it was not very far behind the *Iliad*” Take away the words, and in spirit he was sound

Not that American genius needs patronage in order to ex-

pand For that explosive sort of stuff will expand though screwed up in a vice, and burst it, though it were triple steel It is for the nation's sake, and not for her authors' sake, that I would have America be heedful of the increasing greatness among her writers For how great the shame, if other nations should be before her, in crowning her heroes of the pen! But this is almost the case now American authors have received more just and discriminating praise (however loftily and ridiculously given, in certain cases) even from some Englishmen, than from their own countrymen There are hardly five critics in America, and several of them are asleep As for patronage, it is the American author who now patronizes his country, and not his country him And if at times some among them appeal to the people for more recognition, it is not always with selfish motives, but patriotic ones

It is true, that but few of them as yet have evinced that decided originality which merits great praise But that graceful writer, who perhaps of all Americans has received the most plaudits from his own country for his productions,—that very popular and amiable writer, however good and self-reliant in many things, perhaps owes his chief reputation to the self-acknowledged imitation of a foreign model, and to the studied avoidance of all topics but smooth ones But it is better to fail in originality than to succeed in imitation He who has never failed somewhere, that man cannot be great Failure is the true test of greatness And if it be said, that continual success is a proof that a man wisely knows his powers,—it is only to be added, that, in that case, he knows them to be small Let us believe it, then, once for all, that there is no hope for us in these smooth, pleasing writers that know their powers Without malice, but to speak the plain fact, they but furnish an appendix to Goldsmith, and other English authors And we want no American Goldsmiths nay, we want no American Miltons It were the vilest thing you could say of a true American author, that he were an American Tompkins Call him an American and have done, for you cannot say a nobler thing of him But it is not meant that all American writers should studiously cleave to nationality

in their writings, only this, no American writer should write like an Englishman or a Frenchman, let him write like a man, for then he will be sure to write like an American Let us away with this leaven of literary flunkeyism towards England If either must play the flunkey in this thing, let England do it, not us While we are rapidly preparing for that political supremacy among the nations which prophetically awaits us at the close of the present century, in a literary point of view, we are deplorably unprepared for it, and we seem studious to remain so Hitherto, reasons might have existed why this should be, but no good reason exists now. And all that is requisite to amendment in this matter, is simply this that while freely acknowledging all excellence everywhere, we should refrain from unduly lauding foreign writers, and, at the same time, duly recognize meritorious writers that are our own,—those writers who breathe that unshackled, democratic spirit of Christianity in all things, which now takes the practical lead in this world, though at the same time led by ourselves—us Americans Let us boldly contemn all imitation, though it comes to us graceful and fragrant as the morning, and foster all originality, though at first it be crabbed and ugly as our own pine knots And if any of our authors fail, or seem to fail, then, in the words of my enthusiastic Carolina cousin, let us clap him on the shoulder, and back him against all Europe for his second round The truth is, that in one point of view, this matter of a national literature has come to such a pass with us, that in some sense we must turn bullies, else the day is lost, or superiority so far beyond us, that we can hardly say it will ever be ours

And now, my countrymen, as an excellent author of your own flesh and blood,—an unimitating, and, perhaps, in his way, an inimitable man—whom better can I commend to you, in the first place, than Nathaniel Hawthorne He is one of the new, and far better generation of your writers The smell of your beeches and hemlocks is upon him, your own broad prairies are in his soul, and if you travel away inland into his deep and noble nature, you will hear the far roar of his Niagara Give not over to future generations the glad duty

of acknowledging him for what he is Take that joy to yourself, in your own generation, and so shall he feel those grateful impulses on him, that may possibly prompt him to the full flower of some still greater achievement in your eyes And by confessing him you thereby confess others, you brace the whole brotherhood For genius, all over the world, stands hand in hand, and one shock of recognition runs the whole circle round

In treating of Hawthorne, or rather of Hawthorne in his writings (for I never saw the man, and in the chances of a quiet plantation life, remote from his haunts, perhaps never shall), in treating of his works, I say, I have thus far omitted all mention of his "Twice Told Tales," and "Scarlet Letter." Both are excellent, but full of such manifold, strange, and diffusive beauties, that time would all but fail me to point the half of them out But there are things in those two books, which had they been written in England a century ago, Nathaniel Hawthorne had utterly displaced many of the bright names we now revere on authority But I am content to leave Hawthorne to himself, and to the infallible finding of posterity, and however great may be the praise I have bestowed upon him, I feel that in so doing I have more served and honored myself, than him For, at bottom, great excellence is praise enough to itself, but the feeling of a sincere and appreciative love and admiration towards it, this is relieved by utterance, and warm, honest praise, ever leaves a pleasant flavor in the mouth, and it is an honorable thing to confess to what is honorable in others

But I cannot leave my subject yet. No man can ever read a fine author, and relish him to his very bones while he reads, without subsequently fancying to himself some ideal image of the man and his mind And if you rightly look for it, you will almost always find that the author himself has somewhere furnished you with his own picture For poets (whether in prose or verse), being painters of nature, are like their brethren of the pencil, the true portrait-painters, who, in the multitude of likenesses to be sketched, do not invariably omit their own, and in all high instances, they paint them

any vanity, though all times with a lurking something, that would take several pages to properly define

I submit it, then, to those best acquainted with the man personally, whether the following is not Nathaniel Hawthorne,—and to himself, whether something involved in it does not express the temper of his mind,—that lasting temper of all true, candid men—a seeker, not a finder yet —

"A man now entered, in neglected attire, with the aspect of a thinker, but somewhat too rough-hewn and brawny for a scholar His face was full of sturdy vigor, with some finer and keener attribute beneath, though harsh at first, it was tempered with the glow of a large, warm heart, which had force enough to heat his powerful intellect through and through He advanced to the Intelligencer, and looked at him with a glance of such stern sincerity, that perhaps few secrets were beyond its scope

"I seek for Truth," said he "

• • • • •

Twenty-four hours have elapsed since writing the foregoing I have just returned from the hay-mow, charged more and more with love and admiration of Hawthorne For I have just been gleaning through the Mosses, picking up many things here and there that had previously escaped me And I found that but to glean after this man, is better than to be in at the harvest of others To be frank (though, perhaps, rather foolish) notwithstanding what I wrote yesterday of these Mosses, I had not then culled them all, but had, nevertheless, been sufficiently sensible of the subtle essence in them, as to write as I did To what infinite height of loving wonder and admiration I may yet be borne, when by repeatedly banqueting on these Mosses I shall have thoroughly incorporated their whole stuff into my being,—that, I cannot tell But already I feel that this Hawthorne has dropped germinous seeds into my soul He expands and deepens down, the more I contemplate him, and further and further, shoots his strong New England roots in the hot soil of my Southern soul

By careful reference to the "Table of Contents," I now find

that I have gone through all the sketches, but that when I yesterday wrote, I had not at all read two particular pieces, to which I now desire to call special attention,—“A Select Party,” and “Young Goodman Brown” Here, be it said to all those whom this poor fugitive scrawl of mine may tempt to the perusal of the “Mosses,” that they must on no account suffer themselves to be trifled with, disappointed, or deceived by the triviality of many of the titles to these sketches For in more than one instance, the title utterly belies the piece It is as if rustic demijohns, containing the very best and costliest of Falernian and Tokay, were labelled “Cider,” “Perry,” and “Elder-berry wine” The truth seems to be, that like many other geniuses, this Man of Mosses takes great delight in hoodwinking the world,—at least, with respect to himself Personally, I doubt not that he rather prefers to be generally esteemed but a so-so sort of author, being willing to reserve the thorough and acute appreciation of what he is, to that party most qualified to judge—that is, to himself Besides, at the bottom of their natures, men like Hawthorne, in many things, deem the plaudits of the public such strong presumptive evidence of mediocrity in the object of them, that it would in some degree render them doubtful of their own powers, did they hear much and vociferous braying concerning them in the public pastures True, I have been braying myself (if you please to be witty enough to have it so), but then I claim to be the first that has so brayed in this particular matter, and therefore, while pleading guilty to the charge, still claim all the merit due to originality

But with whatever motive, playful or profound, Nathaniel Hawthorne has chosen to entitle his pieces in the manner he has, it is certain that some of them are directly calculated to deceive—egregiously deceive, the superficial skimmer of pages. To be downright and candid once more, let me cheerfully say, that two of these titles did dolefully dupe no less an eagle-eyed reader than myself, and that, too, after I had been impressed with a sense of the great depth and breadth of this American man “Who in the name of thunder” (as the country-people say in this neighborhood), “who in the name

of thunder, would anticipate any marvel in a piece entitled "Young Goodman Brown?" You would of course suppose that it was a simple little tale, intended as a supplement to "Goody Two Shoes" Whereas, it is deep as Dante, nor can you finish it, without addressing the author in his own words—"It is yours to penetrate, in every bosom, the deep mystery of sin" And with Young Goodman, too, in allegorical pursuit of his Puritan wife, you cry out in your anguish

"'Faith!' shouted Goodman Brown, in a voice of agony and desperation, and the echoes of the forest mocked him, crying,—'Faith! Faith!' as if bewildered wretches were seeking her all through the wilderness"

Now this same piece, entitled "Young Goodman Brown," is one of the two that I had not at all read yesterday, and I allude to it now, because it is, in itself, such a strong positive illustration of that blackness in Hawthorne, which I had assumed from the mere occasional shadows of it, as revealed in several of the other sketches But had I previously perused "Young Goodman Brown," I should have been at no pains to draw the conclusion, which I came to at a time when I was ignorant that the book contained one such direct and unqualified manifestation of it

The other piece of the two referred to, is entitled "A Select Party," which, in my first simplicity upon originally taking hold of the book, I fancied must treat of some pumpkin-pie party in old Salem, or some chowder-party on Cape Cod Whereas, by all the gods of Peedee, it is the sweetest and sublimest thing that has been written since Spenser wrote Nay, there is nothing in Spenser that surpasses it, perhaps nothing that equals it And the test is this read any canto in "The Faery Queen," and then read "A Select Party" and decide which pleases you the most,—that is, if you are qualified to judge Do not be frightened at this, for when Spenser was alive, he was thought of very much as Hawthorne is now,—was generally accounted just such a "gentle" harmless man It may be, that to common eyes, the sublimity of Hawthorne seems lost in his sweetness,—as perhaps in that same "Select

Party" of his, for whom he has builded so august a dome of sunset clouds, and served them on richer plate than Belshazzar's when he banqueted his lords in Babylon.

But my chief business now, is to point out a particular page in this piece, having reference to an honored guest, who under the name of "The Master Genius," but in the guise "of a young man of poor attire, with no insignia of rank or acknowledged eminence," is introduced to the man of Fancy, who is the giver of the feast. Now, the page having reference to this "Master Genius," so happily expresses much of what I yesterday wrote, touching the coming of the literary Shiloh of America, that I cannot but be charmed by the coincidence, especially, when it shows such a parity of ideas, at least in this one point, between a man like Hawthorne and a man like me.

And here, let me throw out another conceit of mine touching this American Shiloh, or "Master Genius," as Hawthorne calls him. May it not be, that his commanding mind has not been, is not, and never will be, individually developed in any one man? And would it, indeed, appear so unreasonable to suppose, that this great fulness and overflowing may be, or may be destined to be, shared by a plurality of men of genius? Surely, to take the very greatest example on record, Shakespeare cannot be regarded as in himself the concretion of all the genius of his time, nor as so immeasurably beyond Marlow, Webster, Ford, Beaumont, Jonson, that those great men can be said to share none of his power? For one, I conceive that there were dramatists in Elizabeth's day, between whom and Shakespeare the distance was by no means great. Let any one, hitherto little acquainted with those neglected old authors, for the first time read them thoroughly, or even read Charles Lamb's Specimens of them, and he will be amazed at the wondrous ability of those Anaks of men, and shocked at this renewed example of the fact, that Fortune has more to do with fame than merit,— though, without merit, lasting fame there can be none.

Nevertheless, it would argue too ill of my country were this maxim to hold good concerning Nathaniel Hawthorne, a man, who already, in some few minds, has shed "such a light,

as never illuminates the earth save when a great heart burns
as the household fire of a grand intellect."

The words are his,—in the "Select Party", and they are a magnificent setting to a coincident sentiment of my own, but ramblingly expressed yesterday, in reference to himself Gain-say it who will, as I now write, I am Posterty speaking by proxy—and after times will make it more than good, when I declare, that the American, who up to the present day has evinced, in literature, the largest brain with the largest heart, that man is Nathaniel Hawthorne Moreover, that whatever Nathaniel Hawthorne may hereafter write, "The Mosses from an Old Manse" will be ultimately accounted his masterpiece For there is a sure, though a secret sign in some works which proves the culmination of the powers (only the developable ones, however) that produced them But I am by no means desirous of the glory of a prophet. I pray Heaven that Hawthorne may yet prove me an impostor in this prediction Especially, as I somehow cling to the strange fancy, that, in all men, hiddenly reside certain wondrous, occult properties—as in some plants and minerals—which by some happy but very rare accident (as bronze was discovered by the melting of the iron and brass at the burning of Corinth) may chance to be called forth here on earth, not entirely waiting for their better discovery in the more congenial, blessed atmosphere of heaven

Once more—for it is hard to be finite upon an infinite subject, and all subjects are infinite By some people this entire scrawl of mine may be esteemed altogether unnecessary, inasmuch "as years ago" (they may say) "we found out the rich and rare stuff in this Hawthorne, whom you now parade forth, as if only *yourself* were the discoverer of this Portuguese diamond in our literature" But even granting all this—and adding to it, the assumption that the books of Hawthorne have sold by the five thousand,—what does that signify? They should be sold by the hundred thousand, and read by the million, and admired by every one who is capable of admiration.

The Literary World, AUG 17, 24, 1850

WILLARD THORP (ED.) Herman Melville (1938)

Henry David Thoreau

THE ideal introduction to Thoreau is Emerson's memorial essay, part of which was delivered at Thoreau's funeral in May, 1862. Dead from tuberculosis at forty-four, he did not live to see in print a final group of characteristic papers that he had prepared for *The Atlantic Monthly*, "Walking," "Autumnal Tints," "Wild Apples." "He chose, wisely no doubt for himself, to be the bachelor of thought and Nature," said Emerson. "The country knows not yet, or in the least part, how great a son it has lost."

Henry David Thoreau (1817-62) was one of the four children of a modest manufacturer of pencils in Concord. He went through Harvard, more inspired by the library than the class-room, and graduated, appropriately enough, just a week before Emerson delivered his revolutionary Phi Beta Kappa address on "The American Scholar." The following year he and his brother John spent a memorable week voyaging on the Concord and Merrimac. He also took trips to Canada, to Maine, to Cape Cod, but Concord was his kingdom and for two years a cabin on the shore of Walden Pond was his home (1845-47). For a living he made lead pencils, worked as handyman for the Emersons for a few years, lectured with little success, met his slight needs by occasional surveying.

He once spent a night in jail as a protest against the poll tax and in 1859 he abandoned entirely his retiring ways in his courageous defense of John Brown, jailed after the unsuccessful raid on Harper's Ferry.

Rather than the militant manifesto on *Civil Disobedience*, or "Life Without Principle," or "Walking," I include the self-contained Conclusion of *Walden* (1854) which was also the conclusion of his thinking at the peak of his life.

Conclusion of Walden

TO the sick the doctors wisely recommend a change of air and scenery Thank Heaven, here is not all the world The buckeye does not grow in New England, and the mockingbird is rarely heard here The wild goose is more of a cosmopolite than we, he breaks his fast in Canada, takes a luncheon in the Ohio, and plumes himself for the night in a southern bayou Even the bison, to some extent, keeps pace with the seasons, cropping the pastures of the Colorado only till a greener and sweeter grass awaits him by the Yellowstone Yet we think that if rail fences are pulled down, and stone walls piled up on our farms, bounds are henceforth set to our lives and our fates decided If you are chosen town clerk, forsooth, you cannot go to Tierra del Fuego this summer but you may go to the land of infernal fire nevertheless The universe is wider than our views of it

Yet we should oftener look over the tafferel of our craft, like curious passengers, and not make the voyage like stupid sailors picking oakum The other side of the globe is but the home of our correspondent. Our voyaging is only great-circle sailing, and the doctors prescribe for diseases of the skin merely One hastens to southern Africa to chase the giraffe, but surely that is not the game he would be after How long, pray, would a man hunt giraffes if he could? Snipes and wood-cocks also may afford rare sport, but I trust it would be nobler game to shoot one's self —

"Direct your eye right inward, and you'll find
A thousand regions in your mind
Yet undiscovered Travel them, and be
Expert in home-cosmography"

What does Africa,—what does the West stand for? Is not our own interior white on the chart? black though it may prove, like the coast, when discovered Is it the source of the Nile, or the Niger, or the Mississippi, or a Northwest Passage around this continent, that we would find? Are these the problems which most concern mankind? Is Franklin the only man who is lost, that his wife should be so earnest to find him? Does Mr Grinnell know where he himself is? Be rather the Mungo Park, the Lewis and Clark and Frobisher, of your own streams and oceans, explore your own higher latitudes,—with shiploads of preserved meats to support you, if they be necessary, and pile the empty cans sky-high for a sign Were preserved meats invented to preserve meat merely? Nay, be a Columbus to whole new continents and worlds within you, opening new channels, not of trade, but of thought Every man is the lord of a realm beside which the earthly empire of the Czar is but a petty state, a hummock left by the ice Yet some can be patriotic who have no *self-respect*, and sacrifice the greater to the less. They love the soil which makes their graves, but have no sympathy with the spirit which may still animate their clay Patriotism is a maggot in their heads What was the meaning of that South-Sea Exploring Expedition, with all its parade and expense, but an indirect recognition of the fact that there are continents and seas in the moral world to which every man is an isthmus or an inlet, yet unexplored by him, but that it is easier to sail many thousand miles through cold and storm and cannibals, in a government ship, with five hundred men and boys to assist one, than it is to explore the private sea, the Atlantic and Pacific Ocean of one's being alone.—

*"Erret, et extremos alter, scrutetur Iberos
Plus habet hic vitae, plus habet ille viae"*

Let them wander and scrutinize the outlandish Australians I have more of God, they more of the road.

It is not worth the while to go round the world to count the

cats in Zanzibar Yet do this even till you can do better, and you may perhaps find some "Symmes' Hole" by which to get at the inside at last. England and France, Spain and Portugal, Gold Coast and Slave Coast, all front on this private sea, but no bark from them has ventured out of sight of land, though it is without doubt the direct way to India If you would learn to speak all tongues and conform to the customs of all nations, if you would travel farther than all travellers, be naturalized in all climes, and cause the Sphinx to dash her head against a stone, even obey the precept of the old philosopher, and Explore thyself Herein are demanded the eye and the nerve Only the defeated and deserters go to the wars, cowards that run away and enlist. Start now on that farthest western way, which does not pause at the Mississippi or the Pacific, nor conduct toward a wornout China or Japan, but leads on direct, a tangent to this sphere, summer and winter, day and night, sun down, moon down, and at last earth down too

It is said that Mirabeau took to highway robbery "to ascertain what degree of resolution was necessary in order to place one's self in formal opposition to the most sacred laws of society" He declared that "a soldier who fights in the ranks does not require half so much courage as a foot-pad,"—"that honor and religion have never stood in the way of a well-considered and a firm resolve" This was manly, as the world goes, and yet it was idle, if not desperate A saner man would have found himself often enough "in-formal opposition" to what are deemed "the most sacred laws of society," through obedience to yet more sacred laws, and so have tested his resolution without going out of his way It is not for a man to put himself in such an attitude to society, but to maintain himself in whatever attitude he find himself through obedience to the laws of his being, which will never be one of opposition to a just government, if he should chance to meet with such.

I left the woods for as good a reason as I went there Perhaps it seemed to me that I had several more lives to live, and could not spare any more time for that one It is remarkable

how easily and insensibly we fall into a particular route, and make a beaten track for ourselves I had not lived there a week before my feet wore a path from my door to the pond-side, and though it is five or six years since I trod it, it is still quite distinct. It is true, I fear, that others may have fallen into it, and so helped to keep it open. The surface of the earth is soft and impressible by the feet of men, and so with the paths which the mind travels How worn and dusty, then, must be the highways of the world, how deep the ruts of tradition and conformity! I did not wish to take a cabin passage, but rather to go before the mast and on the deck of the world, for there I could best see the moonlight amid the mountains I do not wish to go below now

I learned this, at least, by my experiment that if one advances confidently in the direction of his dreams, and endeavors to live the life which he has imagined, he will meet with a success unexpected in common hours He will put some things behind, will pass an invisible boundary, new, universal, and more liberal laws will begin to establish themselves around and within him, or the old laws be expanded, and interpreted in his favor in a more liberal sense, and he will live with the license of a higher order of beings In proportion as he simplifies his life, the laws of the universe will appear less complex, and solitude will not be solitude, nor poverty poverty, nor weakness weakness If you have built castles in the air, your work need not be lost, that is where they should be Now put the foundations under them

It is a ridiculous demand which England and America make, that you shall speak so that they can understand you Neither men nor toadstools grow so As if that were important, and there were not enough to understand you without them As if Nature could support but one order of understandings, could not sustain birds as well as quadrupeds, flying as well as creeping things, and *hush* and *whoa*, which Bright can understand, were the best English. As if there were safety in stupidity alone I fear chiefly lest my expression may not be extra-vagant enough, may not wander far enough beyond the narrow limits of my daily experience, so as to be adequate

to the truth of which I have been convinced *Extra vagance!* it depends on how you are yarded The migrating buffalo, which seeks new pastures in another latitude, is not extravagant like the cow which kicks over the pail, leaps the cowyard fence, and runs after her calf, in milking time I desire to speak somewhere *without bounds*, like a man in a waking moment, to men in their waking moments, for I am convinced that I cannot exaggerate enough even to lay the foundation of a true expression Who that has heard a strain of music feared then lest he should speak extravagantly any more forever? In view of the future or possible, we should live quite laxly and undefined in front, our outlines dim and misty on that side, as our shadows reveal an insensible perspiration toward the sun The volatile truth of our words should continually betray the inadequacy of the residual statement. Their truth is instantly *translated*, its literal monument alone remains The words which express our faith and piety are not definite, yet they are significant and fragrant like frankincense to superior natures

Why level downward to our dullest perception always, and praise that as common sense? The commonest sense is the sense of men asleep, which they express by snoring Sometimes we are inclined to class those who are once-and-a-half-witted with the half-witted, because we appreciate only a third part of their wit Some would find fault with the morning red, if they ever got up early enough "They pretend," as I hear, "that the verses of Kabir have four different senses, illusion, spirit, intellect, and the exotic doctrine of the Vedas," but in this part of the world it is considered a ground for complaint if a man's writings admit of more than one interpretation. While England endeavors to cure the potato-rot, will not any endeavor to cure the brain-rot, which prevails so much more widely and fatally?

I do not suppose that I have attained to obscurity, but I should be proud if no more fatal fault were found with my pages on this score than was found with the Walden ice Southern customers objected to its blue color, which is the evidence of its purity, as if it were muddy, and preferred the

Cambridge ice, which is white, but tastes of weeds The purity men love is like the mists which envelop the earth, and not like the azure ether beyond.

Some are dinning in our ears that we Americans, and moderns generally, are intellectual dwarfs compared with the ancients, or even the Elizabethan men But what is that to the purpose? A living dog is better than a dead lion Shall a man go and hang himself because he belongs to the race of pygmies, and not be the biggest pygmy that he can? Let every one mind his own business, and endeavor to be what he was made.

Why should we be in such desperate haste to succeed and in such desperate enterprises? If a man does not keep pace with his companions, perhaps it is because he hears a different drummer Let him step to the music which he hears, however measured or far away. It is not important that he should mature as soon as an apple tree or an oak Shall he turn his spring into summer? If the condition of things which we were made for is not yet, what were any reality which we can substitute? We will not be shipwrecked on a vain reality. Shall we with pains erect a heaven of blue glass over ourselves, though when it is done we shall be sure to gaze still at the true ethereal heaven far above, as if the former were not?

There was an artist in the city of Kouroo who was disposed to strive after perfection. One day it came into his mind to make a staff Having considered that in an imperfect work time is an ingredient, but into a perfect work time does not enter, he said to himself, It shall be perfect in all respects, though I should do nothing else in my life He proceeded instantly to the forest for wood, being resolved that it should not be made of unsuitable material, and as he searched for and rejected stick after stick, his friends gradually deserted him, for they grew old in their works and died, but he grew not older by a moment. His singleness of purpose and resolution, and his elevated piety, endowed him, without his knowledge, with perennial youth As he made no compromise with Time, Time kept out of his way, and only sighed at a distance because he could not overcome him Before he had

found a stock in all respects suitable the city of Kouroo was a hoary ruin, and he sat on one of its mounds to peel the stick. Before he had given it the proper shape the dynasty of the Candahars was at an end, and with the point of the stick he wrote the name of the last of that race in the sand, and then resumed his work. By the time he had smoothed and polished the staff Kalpa was no longer the pole-star, and ere he had put on the ferule and the head adorned with precious stones, Brahma had awoke and slumbered many times. But why do I stay to mention these things? When the finishing stroke was put to his work, it suddenly expanded before the eyes of the astonished artist into the fairest of all the creations of Brahma. He had made a new system in making a staff, a world with full and fair proportions, in which, though the old cities and dynasties had passed away, fairer and more glorious ones had taken their places. And now he saw by the heap of shavings still fresh at his feet, that, for him and his work, the former lapse of time had been an illusion, and that no more time had elapsed than is required for a single scintillation from the brain of Brahma to fall on and inflame the tinder of a mortal brain. The material was pure, and his art was pure, how could the result be other than wonderful?

No face which we can give to a matter will stead us so well at last as the truth. This alone wears well. For the most part, we are not where we are, but in a false position. Through an infirmity of our natures, we suppose a case, and put ourselves into it, and hence are in two cases at the same time, and it is doubly difficult to get out. In sane moments we regard only the facts, the case that is. Say what you have to say, not what you ought. Any truth is better than make-believe. Tom Hyde, the tinker, standing on the gallows, was asked if he had anything to say "Tell the tailors," said he, "to remember to make a knot in their thread before they take the first stitch." His companion's prayer is forgotten.

However mean your life is, meet it and live it, do not shun it and call it hard names. It is not so bad as you are. It looks poorest when you are richest. The fault-finder will find faults even in paradise. Love your life, poor as it is. You may per-

haps have some pleasant, thrilling, glorious hours, even in a poor-house. The setting sun is reflected from the windows of the alms-house as brightly as from the rich man's abode, the snow melts before its door as early in the spring. I do not see but a quiet mind may live as contentedly there, and have as cheering thoughts, as in a palace. The town's poor seem to me often to live the most independent lives of any. Maybe they are simply great enough to receive without misgiving. Most think that they are above being supported by the town, but it oftener happens that they are not above supporting themselves by dishonest means, which should be more disreputable. Cultivate poverty like a garden herb, like sage. Do not trouble yourself much to get new things, whether clothes or friends. Turn the old, return to them. Things do not change, we change. Sell your clothes and keep your thoughts. God will see that you do not want society. If I were confined to a corner of a garret all my days, like a spider, the world would be just as large to me while I had my thoughts about me. The philosopher said, "From an army of three divisions one can take away its general, and put it in disorder, from the man the most abject and vulgar one cannot take away his thought." Do not seek so anxiously to be developed, to subject yourself to many influences to be played on, it is all dissipation. Humility like darkness reveals the heavenly lights. The shadows of poverty and meanness gather around us, "and lo! creation widens to our view." We are often reminded that if there were bestowed on us the wealth of Crœsus, our aims must still be the same, and our means essentially the same. Moreover, if you are restricted in your range by poverty, if you cannot buy books and newspapers, for instance, you are but confined to the most significant and vital experiences, you are compelled to deal with the material which yields the most sugar and the most starch. It is life near the bone where it is sweetest. You are defended from being a trifler. No man loses ever on a lower level by magnanimity on a higher. Superfluous wealth can buy superfluities only. Money is not required to buy one necessary of the soul.

I live in the angle of a leaden wall, into whose composition

was poured a little alloy of bell-metal Often, in the repose of my mid-day, there reaches my ears a confused *tintinnabulum* from without. It is the noise of my contemporaries My neighbors tell me of their adventures with famous gentlemen and ladies, what notabilities they met at the dinner-table, but I am no more interested in such things than in the contents of the Daily Times The interest and the conversation are about costume and manners chiefly, but a goose is a goose still, dress it as you will They tell me of California and Texas, of England and the Indies, of the Hon Mr ____ of Georgia or Massachusetts, all transient and fleeting phenomena, till I am ready to leap from their court-yard like the Mameluke bey I delight to come to my bearings,—not walk in procession with pomp and parade, in a conspicuous place, but to walk even with the Builder of the universe, if I may,—not to live in this restless, nervous, bustling, trivial Nineteenth Century, but stand or sit thoughtfully while it goes by What are men celebrating? They are all on a committee of arrangements, and hourly expect a speech from somebody God is only the president of the day, and Webster is his orator I love to weigh, to settle, to gravitate toward that which most strongly and rightfully attracts me,—not hang by the beam of the scale and try to weigh less,—not suppose a case, but take the case that is, to travel the only path I can, and that on which no power can resist me It affords me no satisfaction to commence to spring an arch before I have got a solid foundation. Let us not play at kittly-benders There is a solid bottom everywhere We read that the traveller asked the boy if the swamp before him had a hard bottom The boy replied that it had But presently the traveller's horse sank in up to the girths, and he observed to the boy, "I thought you said that this bog had a hard bottom" "So it has," answered the latter, "but you have not got half way to it yet." So it is with the bogs and quicksands of society, but he is an old boy that knows it. Only what is thought, said, or done at a certain rare coincidence is good I would not be one of those who will foolishly drive a nail into mere lath and plastering, such a deed would keep me awake nights Give me a hammer, and let me feel

for the furring Do not depend on the putty. Drive a nail home and clinch it so faithfully that you can wake up in the night and think of your work with satisfaction,—a work at which you would not be ashamed to invoke the Muse So will help you God, and so only Every nail driven should be as another rivet in the machine of the universe, you carrying on the work

Rather than love, than money, than fame, give me truth I sat at a table where were rich food and wine in abundance, an obsequious attendance, but sincerity and truth were not, and I went away hungry from the inhospitable board The hospitality was as cold as the ices I thought that there was no need of ice to freeze them They talked to me of the age of the wine and the fame of the vintage, but I thought of an older, a newer, and purer wine, of a more glorious vintage, which they had not got, and could not buy The style, the house and grounds and "entertainment" pass for nothing with me I called on the king, but he made me wait in his hall, and conducted like a man incapacitated for hospitality There was a man in my neighborhood who lived in a hollow tree His manners were truly regal I should have done better had I called on him

How long shall we sit in our porticoes practising idle and musty virtues, which any work would make impertinent? As if one were to begin the day with long-suffering, and hire a man to hoe his potatoes, and in the afternoon go forth to practise Christian meekness and charity with goodness aforethought! Consider the China pride and stagnant self-complacency of mankind This generation inclines a little to congratulate itself on being the last of an illustrious line, and in Boston and London and Paris and Rome, thinking of its long descent, it speaks of its progress in art and science and literature with satisfaction There are the Records of the Philosophical Societies, and the public Eulogies of Great Men! It is the good Adam contemplating his own virtue "Yes, we have done great deeds, and sung divine songs, which shall never die,"—that is, as long as we can remember them The learned societies and great men of Assyria,—where are they? What youthful philosophers and experimentalists we are!

There is not one of my readers who has yet lived a whole human life. These may be but the spring months in the life of the race. If we have had the seven-years' itch, we have not seen the seventeen-year locust yet in Concord. We are acquainted with a mere pellicle of the globe on which we live. Most have not delved six feet beneath the surface, nor leaped as many above it. We know not where we are. Beside, we are sound asleep nearly half our time. Yet we esteem ourselves wise, and have an established order on the surface. Truly, we are deep thinkers, we are ambitious spirits! As I stand over the insect crawling amid the pine needles on the forest floor, and endeavoring to conceal itself from my sight, and ask myself why it will cherish those humble thoughts, and hide its head from me who might, perhaps, be its benefactor, and impart to its race some cheering information, I am reminded of the greater Benefactor and Intelligence that stands over me the human insect.

There is an incessant influx of novelty into the world, and yet we tolerate incredible dulness. I need only suggest what kind of sermons are still listened to in the most enlightened countries. There are such words as joy and sorrow, but they are only the burden of a psalm, sung with a nasal twang, while we believe in the ordinary and mean. We think that we can change our clothes only. It is said that the British Empire is very large and respectable, and that the United States are a first-rate power. We do not believe that a tide rises and falls behind every man which can float the British Empire like a chip, if he should ever harbor it in his mind. Who knows what sort of seventeen-year locust will next come out of the ground? The government of the world I live in was not framed, like that of Britain, in after-dinner conversations over the wine.

The life in us is like the water in the river. It may rise this year higher than man has ever known it, and flood the parched uplands, even this may be the eventful year, which will drown out all our muskrats. It was not always dry land where we dwell. I see far inland the banks which the stream anciently washed, before science began to record its freshets.

Everyone has heard the story which has gone the rounds of New England, of a strong and beautiful bug which came out of the dry leaf of an old table of apple-tree wood, which had stood in a farmer's kitchen for sixty years, first in Connecticut, and afterward in Massachusetts,—from an egg deposited in the living tree many years earlier still, as appeared by counting the annual layers beyond it, which was heard gnawing out for several weeks, hatched perchance by the heat of an urn. Who does not feed his faith in a resurrection and immortality strengthened by hearing of this? Who knows what beautiful and winged life, whose egg has been buried for ages under many concentric layers of woodenness in the dead dry life of society, deposited at first in the albumen of the green and living tree, which has been gradually converted into the semblance of its well-seasoned tomb—heard perchance gnawing out now for years by the astonished family of man, as they sat round the festive board,—may unexpectedly come forth from amidst society's most trivial and handselled furniture, to enjoy its perfect summer life at last!

I do not say that John or Jonathan will realize all this, but such is the character of that morrow which mere lapse of time can never make to dawn. The light which puts out our eyes is darkness to us. Only that day dawns to which we are awake. There is more day to dawn. The sun is but a morning star.

WALDEN—Ch 18
(1854)

Charles Augustin Sainte-Beuve

CHARLES AUGUSTIN SAINTE-BEUVE (1804-1869) is just a name in literary criticism for most of us—but it happens to be the greatest name—that of a fascinating writer of immeasurable influence on criticism, biography, on literature in general, for the past hundred years. Perhaps his nearest parallel in English is Matthew Arnold who wrote a peculiarly vibrant article about him for the *Encyclopædia Britannica*. At the time of his master's death Arnold said that "first-rate criticism has a permanent value greater than that of any but first-rate works of poetry and art," and he considered Sainte-Beuve first-rate.

From a poor but cultured family of Boulogne, Sainte-Beuve at fourteen went to Paris for further education and won prizes in Latin and history. But it was the three years in medical school that were decisive for his later method and ambition to be "a naturalist of minds." He gave up medicine to write literary and historical articles for a new liberal magazine and thus became associated for a time with the romantic school headed by Victor Hugo. Three volumes of interesting poetry and an autobiographical novel, *Volupté*, met with some success but they did not divert him from his proper career. Scores of studies of ancient Greek and modern writers—collected in seven volumes of *Portraits*, appeared before the revolutionary dividing line of 1848, when he lost his sinecure as one of the keepers of the Mazarin library.

After a season in Belgium largely devoted to lectures on Chateaubriand, which became the basis for one of his most celebrated books, he returned impatiently to Paris—and the momentous decision of his career. He was invited by Dr Veron, the director of the *Constitutionnel*, to write a weekly

Monday article—hence *Causeries du Lundi*. He proceeded to do this from October, 1849, until November, 1852, and then continued in the *Moniteur* until January, 1855. The consequence? Some two hundred and sixty rich, rounded, scholarly yet personal essays published weekly, with hardly a break, over a period of five years and three months. There is no other such massive achievement in the history of criticism.

Sainte-Beuve discontinued the *Lundis* when he was appointed a professor at the Imperial College of France, but he only gave two lectures. His acceptance of and indeed support of, Louis Bonaparte's dictatorship had completely severed him from his old liberal associates, and resentful students made it impossible for him to continue his course on Virgil. Bowing to their will he returned to his study and turned his lecture notes into a book on Virgil. Then more writing, some uninterrupted teaching, and at fifty-seven he began a new series of *Lundis* (1862) which he continued almost until his death seven years later.

Appointed to the Senate in 1865, Sainte-Beuve did not prove to be merely a glittering ornament for the government. In fact he made three courageous speeches against measures restraining education, the press and libraries.

Even one who has only read a small portion of Sainte-Beuve's sixty volumes is hard put to it in making a selection. Shall it be one of the famous *Lundis* on Montaigne, or Rabelais, or William Cowper, or Balzac or Joubert? Instead we present his classic answer to a question that is still being asked:

What is a Classic?

A DELICATE question, to which somewhat diverse solutions might be given according to times and seasons An intelligent man suggests it to me, and I intend to try, if not to solve, it, at least to examine and discuss it face to face with my readers, were it only to persuade them to answer it for themselves, and, if I can, to make their opinion and mine on the point clear And why, in criticism, should we not, from time to time, venture to treat some of those subjects which are not personal, in which we no longer speak of some one but of some thing? Our neighbours, the English, have well succeeded in making of it a special division of literature under the modest title of "Essays" It is true that in writing of such subjects, always slightly abstract and moral, it is advisable to speak of them in a season of quiet, to make sure of our own attention and of that of others, to seize one of those moments of calm moderation and leisure seldom granted our amiable France, even when she is desirous of being wise and is not making revolutions, her brilliant genius can scarcely tolerate them

A classic, according to the usual definition, is an old author canonised by admiration, and an authority in his particular style The word *classic* was first used in this sense by the Romans With them not all the citizens of the different classes were properly called *classici*, but only those of the chief class, those who possessed an income of a certain fixed sum Those who possessed a smaller income were described by the term *infra classem*, below the pre-eminent class The word *classicus* was used in a figurative sense by Aulus Gellius, and applied to writers a writer of worth and distinction, *classicus asiduusque scriptor*, a writer who is of account, has real prop-

erty, and is not lost in the proletariat crowd Such an expression implies an age sufficiently advanced to have already made some sort of valuation and classification of literature

At first the only true classics for the moderns were the ancients The Greeks, by peculiar good fortune and natural enlightenment of mind, had no classics but themselves They were at first the only classical authors for the Romans, who strove and contrived to imitate them After the great periods of Roman literature, after Cicero and Virgil, the Romans in their turn had their classics, who became almost exclusively the classical authors of the centuries which followed The middle ages, which were less ignorant of Latin antiquity than is believed, but which lacked proportion and taste, confused the ranks and orders Ovid was placed above Homer, and Boetius seemed a classic equal to Plato The revival of learning in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries helped to bring this long chaos to order, and then only was admiration rightly proportioned Thenceforth the true classical authors of Greek and Latin antiquity stood out in a luminous background, and were harmoniously grouped on their two heights

Meanwhile modern literatures were born, and some of the more precocious, like the Italian, already possessed the style of antiquity Dante appeared, and, from the very first, posterity greeted him as a classic Italian poetry has since shrunk into far narrower bounds, but, whenever it desired to do so, it always found again and preserved the impulse and echo of its lofty origin It is no indifferent matter for a poetry to derive its point of departure and classical source in high places, for example, to spring from Dante rather than to issue laboriously from Malherbe

Modern Italy had her classical authors, and Spain had every right to believe that she also had hers at a time when France was yet seeking hers A few talented writers endowed with originality and exceptional animation, a few brilliant efforts, isolated, without following, interrupted and recommenced, did not suffice to endow a nation with a solid and imposing basis of literary wealth The idea of a classic implies something that has continuance and consistence, and

which produces unity and tradition, fashions and transmits itself, and endures. It was only after the glorious years of Louis XIV that the nation felt with tremor and pride that such good fortune had happened to her. Every voice informed Louis XIV of it with flattery, exaggeration, and emphasis, yet with a certain sentiment of truth. Then arose a singular and striking contradiction those men of whom Perrault was the chief, the men who were most smitten with the marvels of the age of Louis the Great, who even went the length of sacrificing the ancients to the moderns, aimed at exalting and canonising even those whom they regarded as inveterate opponents and adversaries. Boileau avenged and angrily upheld the ancients against Perrault, who extolled the moderns—that is to say, Corneille, Molière, Pascal, and the eminent men of his age. Boileau, one of the first, included kindly La Fontaine, taking part in the dispute in behalf of the learned Huet, did not perceive that, in spite of his defects, he was in his turn on the point of being held as a classic himself.

Example is the best definition. From the time France possessed her age of Louis XIV and could contemplate it at a little distance, she knew, better than by any arguments, what to be classical meant. The eighteenth century, even in its medley of things, strengthened this idea through some fine works, due to its four great men. Read Voltaire's *Age of Louis XIV*, Montesquieu's *Greatness and Fall of the Romans*, Buffon's *Epochs of Nature*, the beautiful pages of reverie and natural description of Rousseau's *Savoyard Vicar*, and say if the eighteenth century, in these memorable works, did not understand how to reconcile tradition with freedom of development and independence. But at the beginning of the present century and under the Empire, in sight of the first attempts of a decidedly new and somewhat adventurous literature, the idea of a classic in a few resisting minds, more sorrowful than severe, was strangely narrowed and contracted. The first Dictionary of the Academy (1694) merely defined a classical author as "a much-approved ancient writer, who is an authority as regards the subject he

treats" The Dictionary of the Academy of 1835 narrows that definition still more, and gives precision and even limit to its rather vague form It describes classical authors as those "who have become *models* in any language whatever," and in all the articles which follow, the expressions, *models*, *fired rules* for composition and style, *strict rules* of art to which men must conform, continually recur That definition of *classic* was evidently made by the respectable Academicians, our predecessors, in face and sight of what was then called *romantic*— that is to say, in sight of the enemy It seems to me time to renounce those timid and restrictive definitions and to free our mind of them

A true classic, as I should like to hear it defined, is an author who has enriched the human mind, increased its treasure and caused it to advance a step, who has discovered some moral and not equivocal truth, or revealed some eternal passion in that heart where all seemed known and discovered, who has expressed his thought, observation, or invention, in no matter what form, only provided it be broad and great, refined and sensible, sane and beautiful in itself, who has spoken to all in his own peculiar style, a style which is found to be also that of the whole world, a style new without neologism, new and old, easily contemporary with all time.

Such a classic may for a moment have been revolutionary, it may at least have seemed so, but it is not, it only lashed and subverted whatever prevented the restoration of the balance of order and beauty

If it is desired, names may be applied to this definition which I wish to make purposely majestic and fluctuating, or in a word, all-embracing I should first put there Corneille of the *Polyeucte*, *Cinna*, and *Horaces* I should put Molière there, the fullest and most complete poetic genius we have ever had in France Goethe, the king of critics, said —

"Molière is so great that he astonishes us afresh every time we read him He is a man apart, his plays border on the tragic, and no one has the courage to try and imitate him His *Avare*, where vice destroys all affection between

father and son, is one of the most sublime works, and dramatic in the highest degree In a drama every action ought to be important in itself, and to lead to an action greater still In this respect *Tartuffe* is a model What a piece of exposition the first scene is! From the beginning everything has an important meaning, and causes something much more important to be foreseen. The exposition in a certain play of Lessing that might be mentioned is very fine, but the world only sees that of *Tartuffe* once It is the finest of the kind we possess Every year I read a play of Molière, just as from time to time I contemplate some engraving after the great Italian masters ”

I do not conceal from myself that the definition of the classic I have just given somewhat exceeds the notion usually ascribed to the term It should, above all, include conditions of uniformity, wisdom, moderation, and reason, which dominate and contain all the others Having to praise M Royer-Collard, M de Rémusat said—”If he derives *purity of taste, propriety of terms, variety of expression*, attentive care in *suiting the diction to the thought*, from our classics, he owes to himself alone the distinctive character he gives it all” It is here evident that the part allotted to classical qualities seems mostly to depend on harmony and *nuances* of expression, on graceful and temperate style such is also the most general opinion. In this sense the pre-eminent classics would be writers of a middling order, exact, sensible, elegant, always clear, yet of noble feeling and airily veiled strength Marie-Joseph Chenier has described the poetics of those temperate and accomplished writers in lines where he shows himself their happy disciple —

“It is good sense, reason which does all,—virtue, genius, soul, talent, and taste —What is virtue? reason put in practice,—talent? reason expressed with brilliance,—soul? reason delicately put forth,—and genius is sublime reason ”

While writing those lines he was evidently thinking of Pope, Boileau, and Horace, the master of them all The peculiar characteristic of the theory which subordinated imagination and feeling itself to reason, of which Scaliger perhaps

gave the first sign among the moderns, is, properly speaking, the *Latin* theory, and for a long time it was also by preference the *French* theory. If it is used appositely, if the term *reason* is not abused, that theory possesses some truth, but it is evident that it is abused, and that if, for instance, reason can be confounded with poetic genius and made one with it in a moral epistle, it cannot be the same thing as the genius, so varied and so diversely creative in its expression of the passions, of the drama or the epic. Where will you find reason in the fourth book of the *Aeneid* and the transports of Dido? Be that as it may, the spirit which prompted the theory, caused writers who ruled their inspiration, rather than those who abandoned themselves to it, to be placed in the first rank of classics, to put Virgil there more surely than Homer, Racine in preference to Corneille. The masterpiece to which the theory likes to point, which in fact brings together all conditions of prudence, strength, tempered boldness, moral elevation, and grandeur, is *Athalie*. Turenne in his two last campaigns and Racine in *Athalie* are the great examples of what wise and prudent men are capable of when they reach the maturity of their genius and attain their supremest boldness.

Buffon, in his Discourse on Style, insisting on the unity of design, arrangement, and execution, which are the stamps of true classical works, said — “Every subject is one, and however vast it is, it can be comprised in a single treatise. Interruptions, pauses, subdivisions should only be used when many subjects are treated, when, having to speak of great, intricate, and dissimilar things, the march of genius is interrupted by the multiplicity of obstacles, and contracted by the necessity of circumstances otherwise, far from making a work more solid, a great number of divisions destroys the unity of its parts, the book appears clearer to the view, but the author’s design remains obscure.” And he continues his criticism, having in view Montesquieu’s *Spirit of Laws*, an excellent book at bottom, but sub-divided the famous author, worn out before the end, was unable to infuse inspiration into all his ideas, and to arrange all his matter

However, I can scarcely believe that Buffon was not also thinking, by way of contrast, of Bossuet's *Discourse on Universal History*, a subject vast indeed, and yet of such an unity that the great orator was able to comprise it in a single treatise. When we open the first edition, that of 1681, before the division into chapters, which was introduced later, pass from the margin into the text, everything is developed in a single series, almost in one breath. It might be said that the orator has here acted like the nature of which Buffon speaks, that "he has worked on an eternal plan from which he has nowhere departed," so deeply does he seem to have entered into the familiar counsels and designs of providence.

Are *Athalie* and the *Discourse on Universal History* the greatest masterpieces that the strict classical theory can present to its friends as well as to its enemies? In spite of the admirable simplicity and dignity in the achievement of such unique productions, we should like, nevertheless, in the interests of art, to expand that theory a little, and to show that it is possible to enlarge it without relaxing the tension Goethe, whom I like to quote on such a subject, said —

"I call the classical *healthy*, and the romantic *sickly*. In my opinion the *Nibelungen* song is as much a classic as Homer. Both are healthy and vigorous. The works of the day are romantic, not because they are new, but because they are weak, ailing, or sickly. Ancient works are classical not because they are old, but because they are powerful, fresh, and healthy. If we regarded romantic and classical from those two points of view we should soon all agree."

Indeed, before determining and fixing the opinions on that matter, I should like every unbiased mind to take a voyage round the world and devote itself to a survey of different literatures in their primitive vigour and infinite variety. What would be seen? Chief of all a Homer, the father of the classical world, less a single distinct individual than the vast living expression of a whole epoch and a semi-barbarous civilisation. In order to make him a true classic, it was necessary to attribute to him later a design, a plan, lit-

erary invention, qualities of articism and urbanity of which he had certainly never dreamed in the luxuriant development of his natural inspirations And who appear by his side? August, venerable ancients, the Æschyluses and the Sophocles, mutilated, it is true, and only there to present us with a *débris* of themselves, the survivors of many others as worthy, doubtless, as they to survive, but who have succumbed to the injuries of time This thought alone would teach a man of impartial mind not to look upon the whole of even classical literatures with a too narrow and restricted view, he would learn that the exact and well-proportioned order which has since so largely prevailed in our admiration of the past was only the outcome of artificial circumstances

And in reaching the modern world, how would it be? The greatest names to be seen at the beginning of literatures are those which disturb and run counter to certain fixed ideas of what is beautiful and appropriate in poetry For example, is Shakespeare a classic? Yes, now, for England and the world, but in the time of Pope he was not considered so Pope and his friends were the only pre-eminent classics, directly after their death they seemed so for ever. At the present time they are still classics, as they deserve to be, but they are only of the second order, and are for ever subordinated and relegated to their rightful place by him who has again come to his own on the height of the horizon

It is not, however, for me to speak ill of Pope or his great disciples, above all, when they possess pathos and naturalness like Goldsmith, after the greatest they are perhaps the most agreeable writers and the poets best fitted to add charm to life Once when Lord Bolingbroke was writing to Swift, Pope added a postscript, in which he said—"I think some advantage would result to our age, if we three spent three years together" Men who, without boasting, have the right to say such things must never be spoken of lightly the fortunate ages, when men of talent could propose such things, then no chimera, are rather to be envied The ages called by the name of Louis XIV or of Queen Anne are, in the dispassionate sense of the word, the only true classical ages,

those which offer protection and a favourable climate to real talent We know only too well how in our untrammelled times, through the instability and storminess of the age, talents are lost and dissipated Nevertheless, let us acknowledge our age's part and superiority in greatness True and sovereign genius triumphs over the very difficulties that cause others to fail Dante, Shakespeare, and Milton were able to attain their height and produce their imperishable works in spite of obstacles, hardships and tempests Byron's opinion of Pope has been much discussed, and the explanation of it sought in the kind of contradiction by which the singer of *Don Juan* and *Childe Harold* extolled the purely classical school and pronounced it the only good one, while himself acting so differently Goethe spoke the truth on that point when he remarked that Byron, great by the flow and source of poetry, feared that Shakespeare was more powerful than himself in the creation and realisation of his characters "He would have liked to deny it, the elevation so free from egoism irritated him, he felt when near it that he could not display himself at ease He never denied Pope, because he did not fear him, he knew that Pope was only a *low wall* by his side"

If, as Byron desired, Pope's school had kept the supremacy and a sort of honorary empire in the past, Byron would have been the first and only poet in his particular style, the height of Pope's wall shuts out Shakespeare's great figure from sight, whereas when Shakespeare reigns and rules in all his greatness, Byron is only second

In France there was no great classic before the age of Louis XIV, the Dantes and Shakespeares, the early authorities to whom, in times of emancipation, men sooner or later return, were wanting There were mere sketches of great poets, like Mathurin Regnier, like Rabelais, without any ideal, without the depth of emotion and the seriousness which canonises Montaigne was a kind of premature classic, of the family of Horace, but for want of worthy surroundings, like a spoiled child, he gave himself up to the unbridled fancies of his style and humour Hence it happened that France, less than any other nation, found in her old authors a right to demand

vehemently at a certain time literary liberty and freedom, and that it was more difficult for her, in enfranchising herself, to remain classical. However, with Molière and La Fontaine among her classics of the great period, nothing could justly be refused to those who possessed courage and ability.

The important point now seems to me to be to uphold, while extending, the idea and belief. There is no receipt for making classics, this point should be clearly recognised. To believe that an author will become a classic by imitating certain qualities of purity, moderation, accuracy, and elegance, independently of the style and inspiration, is to believe that after Racine the father there is a place for Racine the son, dull and estimable *rôle*, the worst in poetry. Further, it is hazardous to take too quickly and without opposition the place of a classic in the sight of one's contemporaries, in that case there is a good chance of not retaining the position with posterity. Fontanes in his day was regarded by his friends as a pure classic, see how at twenty-five years' distance his star has set. How many of these precocious classics are there who do not endure, and who are so only for a while! We turn round one morning and are surprised not to find them standing behind us. Madame de Sévigné would wittily say they possessed but an *evanescent colour*. With regard to classics, the least expected prove the best and greatest seek them rather in the vigorous genius born immortal and flourishing for ever. Apparently the least classical of the four great poets of the age of Louis XIV was Molière, he was then applauded far more than he was esteemed, men took delight in him without understanding his worth. After him, La Fontaine seemed the least classical observe after two centuries what is, the result for both. Far above Boileau, even above Racine, are they not now unanimously considered to possess in the highest degree the characteristics of an all-embracing morality?

Meanwhile there is no question of sacrificing or depreciating anything. I believe the temple of taste is to be rebuilt, but its reconstruction is merely a matter of enlargement, so that it may become the home of all noble human beings, of

all who have permanently increased the sum of the mind's delights and possessions As for me, who cannot, obviously, in any degree pretend to be the architect or designer of such a temple, I shall confine myself to expressing a few earnest wishes, to submit, as it were, my designs for the edifice Above all I should desire not to exclude any one among the worthy, each should be in his place there, from Shakespeare, the freest of creative geniuses, and the greatest of classics without knowing it, to Andrieux, the last of classics in little "There is more than one chamber in the mansions of my Father," that should be as true of the kingdom of the beautiful here below, as of the kingdom of Heaven Homer, as always and everywhere, should be first, likest a god, but behind him, like the procession of the three wise kings of the East, would be seen the three great poets, the three Homers, so long ignored by us, who wrote epics for the use of the old peoples of Asia, the poets Valmiki, Vyasa of the Hindoos, and Firdousi of the Persians in the domain of taste it is well to know that such men exist, and not to divide the human race Our homage paid to what is recognised as soon as perceived, we must not stray further, the eye should delight in a thousand pleasing or majestic spectacles, should rejoice in a thousand varied and surprising combinations, whose apparent confusion would never be without concord and harmony The oldest of the wise men and poets, those who put human morality into maxims, and those who in simple fashion sung it, would converse together in *rare and gentle* speech, and would not be surprised at understanding each other's meaning at the very first word Solon, Hesiod, Theognis, Job, Solomon, and why not Confucius, would welcome the cleverest moderns, La Rochefoucauld and La Bruyère, who, when listening to them, would say "they knew all that we know, and in repeating life's experiences, we have discovered nothing" On the hill, most easily discernible, and of most accessible ascent, Virgil, surrounded by Menander, Tibullus, Terence, Fénélon, would occupy himself in discoursing with them with great charm and divine enchantment his gentle countenance would shine with an inner light, and be tinged with modesty, as on

the day when entering the theatre at Rome, just as they finished reciting his verses, he saw the people rise with a unanimous movement and pay to him the same homage as to Augustus Not far from him, regretting the separation from so dear a friend, Horace, in his turn, would preside (as far as so accomplished and wise a poet could preside) over the group of poets of social life who could talk although they sang,—Pope, Boileau, the one become less irritable, the other less fault-finding Montaigne, a true poet, would be among them, and would give the finishing touch that should deprive that delightful corner of the air of a literary school There would La Fontaine forget himself, and becoming less volatile would wander no more Voltaire would be attracted by it, but while finding pleasure in it would not have patience to remain. A little lower down, on the same hill as Virgil, Xenophon, with simple bearing, looking in no way like a general, but rather resembling a priest of the Muses, would be seen gathering round him the Attics of every tongue and of every nation, the Addisons, Pellissons, Vauvenargues—all who feel the value of an easy persuasiveness, an exquisite simplicity, and a gentle negligence mingled with ornament. In the centre of the place, in the portico of the principal temple (for there would be several in the enclosure), three great men would like to meet often, and when they were together, no fourth, however great, would dream of joining their discourse or their silence In them would be seen beauty, proportion in greatness, and that perfect harmony which appears but once in the full youth of the world Their three names have become the ideal of art—Plato, Sophocles, and Demosthenes Those demi-gods honoured, we see a numerous and familiar company of choice spirits who follow, the Cervantes and Molières, practical painters of life, indulgent friends who are still the first of benefactors, who laughingly embrace all mankind, turn man's experience to gaiety, and know the powerful workings of a sensible, hearty, and legitimate joy I do not wish to make this description which if complete would fill a volume, any longer. In the middle ages, believe me, Dante would occupy the sacred heights at the feet of the singer of Paradise all

Italy would be spread out like a garden, Boccaccio and Ariosto would there disport themselves, and Tasso would find again the orange groves of Sorrento Usually a corner would be reserved for each of the various nations, but the authors would take delight in leaving it, and in their travels would recognise, where we should least expect it, brothers or masters Lucretius, for example, would enjoy discussing the origin of the world and the reducing of chaos to order with Milton But both arguing from their own point of view, they would only agree as regards divine pictures of poetry and nature

Such are our classics, each individual imagination may finish the sketch and choose the group preferred For it is necessary to make a choice, and the first condition of taste, after obtaining knowledge of all, lies not in continual travel, but in rest and cessation from wandering Nothing blunts and destroys taste so much as endless journeyings, the poetic spirit is not the *Wandering Jew* However, when I speak of resting and making choice, my meaning is not that we are to imitate those who charm us most among our masters in the past Let us be content to know them, to penetrate them, to admire them, but let us, the late-comers, endeavour to be ourselves Let us have the sincerity and naturalness of our own thoughts, of our own feelings, so much is always possible To that let us add what is more difficult, elevation, an aim, if possible, towards an exalted goal, and while speaking our own language, and submitting to the conditions of the times in which we live, whence we derive our strength and our defects, let us ask from time to time, our brows lifted towards the heights and our eyes fixed on the group of honoured mortals *what would they say of us?*

But why speak always of authors and writings? Maybe an age is coming when there will be no more writing Happy those who read and read again, those who in their reading can follow their unrestrained inclination! There comes a time in life when, all our journeys over, our experiences ended, there is no enjoyment more delightful than to study and thoroughly examine the things we know, to take pleasure in what we feel, and in seeing and seeing again the people we

love the pure joys of our maturity Then it is that the word classic takes its true meaning, and is defined for every man of taste by an irresistible choice Then taste is formed, it is shaped and definite, then good sense, if we are to possess it at all, is perfected in us We have neither more time for experiments, nor a desire to go forth in search of pastures new. We cling to our friends, to those proved by a long intercourse Old wine, old books, old friends We say to ourselves with Voltaire in these delightful lines —

"Let us enjoy, let us write, let us live, my dear Horace! . . . I have lived longer than you my verse will not last so long But on the brink of the tomb I shall make it my chief care—to follow the lessons of your philosophy—to despise death in enjoying life—to read your writings full of charm and good sense—as we drink an old wine which revives our senses"

In fact, be it Horace or another who is the author preferred, who reflects our thoughts in all the wealth of their maturity, of some one of those excellent and antique minds shall we request an interview at every moment, of some one of them shall we ask a friendship which never deceives, which could not fail us, to some one of them shall we appeal for that sensation of serenity and amenity (we have often need of it) which reconciles us with mankind and with ourselves

—CAUSERIES DU LUNDI, III (1850)
ESSAYS, TRANS BY ELIZABETH LEE

Walter Bagehot

WALTER BAGEHOT (1826-77) was an English banker by inheritance, an economist and advisor to politicians and financiers by special equipment and a wide-ranging man of letters by avocation. *The English Constitution* (1867) was a vivid description of the British cabinet system of government at work in contrast to the American "checks-and-balances" system. *Physics and Politics* (1869) was a pioneer application of Darwinian principles to the growth of human societies. *Lombard Street* (1873) was a description of the British financial system at work in the form of the various banks located in the vicinity of Lombard Street, London's Wall Street. Bagehot also had time to contribute to periodicals numerous literary and biographical studies which were published after his sudden death at fifty-one. A man of rare charm and conversational ability, he was much lamented in many circles.

Mr Cobden

TWENTY-THREE years ago— and it is very strange that it should be so many years—when Mr Cobden first began to hold Free-trade meetings in the agricultural districts, people there were much confused. They could not believe the Mr. Cobden they saw to be the “Mr Cobden that was in the papers.” They expected a burly demagogue from the North, ignorant of rural matters, absorbed in manufacturing ideas, appealing to class prejudices—hostile and exciting hostility. They saw a “sensitive and almost slender man, of shrinking nerve, full of rural ideas, who proclaimed himself the son of a farmer, who understood and could state the facts of agricultural life far better than most agriculturists, who was most anxious to convince every one of what he thought the truth, and who was almost more anxious not to offend any one.” The tradition is dying out, but Mr Cobden acquired, even in those days of Free-trade agitation, a sort of agricultural popularity. He excited a personal interest, he left what may be called a sense of himself among his professed enemies. They were surprised at finding that he was not what they thought, they were charmed to find that he was not what they expected, they were fascinated to find what he was. The same feeling has been evident at his sudden death—a death at least which was to the mass of occupied men sudden. Over political Belgravia—the last part of English society Mr Cobden ever cultivated—there was a sadness. Every one felt that England had lost an individuality which it could never have again, which was of the highest value, which was in its own kind altogether unequalled.

What used to strike the agricultural mind, as different from what they fancied, and most opposite to a Northern agitator,

was a sort of playfulness They could hardly believe that the lurking smile, the perfectly magical humour which they were so much struck by, could be that of a "Manchester man" Mr Cobden used to say, "I have as much right as any man to call myself the representative of the tenant farmer, for I am a farmer's son, and the son of a Sussex farmer" But agriculturists keenly felt that this was not the explanation of the man they saw Perhaps they could not have thoroughly explained, but they perfectly knew that they were hearing a man of singular and most peculiar genius, fitted as if by "natural selection" for the work he had to do, and not wasting a word on any other work or anything else, least of all upon himself

Mr Cobden was very anomalous in two respects He was a sensitive agitator Generally, an agitator is a rough man of the O'Connell type, who says anything himself, and lets others say anything You "peg into me and I will peg into you, and let us see which will win," is his motto But Mr Cobden's habit and feeling were utterly different He never spoke ill of anyone He arraigned principles, but not persons We fearlessly say that after a career of agitation of thirty years, not one single individual has—we do not say a valid charge, but a producible charge—a charge which he would wish to bring forward against Mr Cobden You cannot find the man who says, "Mr Cobden said this of me, and it was not true" This may seem trivial praise, and on paper it looks easy But to those who know the great temptations of actual life it means very much How would any other great agitator, O'Connell or Hunt or Cobbett look, if tried by such a test? Very rarely, if even ever in history, has a man achieved so much by his words—been victor in what was thought at the time to be a class struggle—and yet spoken so little evil as Mr Cobden There is hardly a word to be found perhaps, even now, which the recording angel would wish to blot out We may on other grounds object to an agitator who lacerates no one, but no watchful man of the world will deny that such an agitator has vanquished one of life's most imperious and difficult temptations

Perhaps some of our readers may remember as vividly as we do a curious instance of Cobden's sensitiveness. He said at Drury Lane Theatre, in tones of feeling, almost of passion, curiously contrasting with the ordinary coolness of his nature, "I could not serve with Sir Robert Peel." After more than twenty years, the curiously thrilling tones of that phrase still live in our ears. Mr Cobden alluded to the charge which Sir Robert Peel had made, or half made, that the Anti-Corn Law League and Mr Cobden had, by their action and agitation, conducted to the actual assassination of Mr Drummond, his secretary, and the intended assassination of himself—Sir Robert Peel. No excuse or palliation could be made for such an assertion except the most important one, that Peel's nerves were as susceptible and sensitive as Mr Cobden's. But the profound feeling with which Mr Cobden spoke of it is certain. He felt it as a man feels an unjust calumny, an unfounded stain on his honour.

Mr Disraeli said on Monday night (and he has made many extraordinary assertions, but this is about the queerest), "Mr Cobden had a profound reverence for tradition." If there is any single quality which Mr Cobden had not, it was traditional reverence. But probably Mr Disraeli meant what was most true, that Mr Cobden had a delicate dislike of offending other men's opinions. He dealt with them tenderly. He did not like to have his own creed coarsely attacked, and he did—he could not help doing—as he would be done by, he never attacked any man's creed coarsely or roughly, or in any way except by what he in his best conscience thought the fairest and justest argument.

This sensitive nature is one marked peculiarity in Mr Cobden's career as an agitator, and another is, that he was an agitator for men of business.

Generally speaking, occupied men charged with the responsibilities and laden with the labour of grave affairs are jealous of agitation. They know how much may be said against any one who is responsible for anything. They know how unanswerable such charges nearly always are, and how false they easily may be. A capitalist can hardly help thinking, "Sup-

pose a man was to make a speech against my mode of conducting my own business, how much would he have to say!" Now it is an exact description of Mr Cobden, that by the personal magic of a single-minded practicability he made men of business abandon this objection. He made them rather like the new form of agitation. He made them say, "How business-like, how wise, just what it would have been right to do."

Mr Cobden of course was not the discoverer of the Free-trade principle. He did not first find out that the Corn Laws were bad laws. But he was the most effectual of those who discovered how the Corn Laws were to be repealed, how Free-trade was to change from a doctrine of the "Wealth of Nations" into a principle of tariffs and a fact of real life. If a thing was right, to Mr Cobden's mind it ought to be done, and as Adam Smith's doctrines were admitted on theory, he could not believe that they ought to lie idle, that they ought to be "bedridden in the dormitory of the understanding."

Lord Houghton once said, "In my time political economy books used to begin, 'Suppose a man on an island.' " Mr Cobden's speeches never began so. He was altogether a man of business speaking to men of business. Some of us may remember the almost arch smile with which he said "the House of Commons does not seem quite to understand the difference between a cotton mill and a print work." It was almost amusing to him to think that the first assembly of the first mercantile nation could be, as they were and are, very dim in their notions of the most material divisions of their largest industry. It was this evident and first-hand familiarity with real facts and actual life which enabled Mr Cobden to inspire a curiously diffused confidence in all matter-of-fact men. He diffused a kind of "economical faith." People in those days had only to say, "Mr Cobden said so," and other people went and "believed it."

Mr Cobden had nothing in the received sense classical about his oratory, but it is quite certain that Aristotle, the greatest teacher of the classical art of rhetoric, would very keenly have appreciated his oratory. This sort of economical

faith is exactly what he would most have valued, what he most prescribed He said "*A speaker should convince his audience that he was a likely person to know*" This was exactly what Mr Cobden did And the matter-of-fact philosopher would have much liked Mr Cobden's habit of "coming to the point" It would have been thoroughly agreeable to his positive mind to see so much of clear, obvious argument He would not, indeed, have been able to conceive a "League Meeting" There has never, perhaps, been another time in the history of the world when excited masses of men and women hung on the words of one talking political economy The excitement of these meetings was keener than any political excitement of the last twenty years, keener infinitely than any which there is now It may be said, and truly, that the interest of the subject was Mr Cobden's felicity, not his mind, but it may be said with equal truth that the excitement was much greater when he was speaking than when any one else was speaking By a kind of keenness of nerve, he said the exact word most fitted to touch, not the bare abstract understanding, but the quick individual perceptions of his hearers

We do not wish to make this article a mere panegyric Mr Cobden was far too manly to like such folly His mind was very peculiar, and like all peculiar minds had its sharp limits He had what we may call a supplementary understanding, that is, a bold, original intellect, acting on a special experience, and striking out views and principles not known to or neglected by ordinary men He did not possess the traditional education of his country, and did not understand it The solid heritage of transmitted knowledge has more value, we believe, than he would have accorded to it There was too a defect in business faculty not identical, but perhaps not altogether without analogy The late Mr James Wilson used to say, "Cobden's administrative power I do not think much of, but he is most valuable in counsel, always original, always shrewd, and not at all extreme" He was not altogether equal to meaner men in some beaten tracks and pathways of life, though he was far their superior in all matters requiring an

original stress of speculation, an innate energy of thought.

It may be said, and truly said, that he has been cut off before his time. A youth and manhood so spent as his well deserved a green old age. But so it was not to be. He has left us, quite independently of his positive works, of the repeal of the Corn Laws, of the French treaty, a rare gift—the gift of a unique character. There has been nothing before Richard Cobden like him in English history, and perhaps there will not be anything like him. And his character is of the simple, emphatic, picturesque sort which most easily, when opportunities are given as they were to him, goes down to posterity. May posterity learn from him! Only last week we hoped to have learned something ourselves.

“But what is before us we know not,
And we know not what shall succeed.”

BIOGRAPHICAL STUDIES (1889)

Walter Pater

WALTER PATER (1839-94), the sensitive Oxford recluse, wrote with the care of a goldsmith or a cutter of cameos. His first and most famous volume, *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* (1873), was followed by a too richly wrought novel, *Marius the Epicurean*, depicting the mental growth of a young Roman during the decline of the Empire, *Imaginary Portraits*, *Appreciations*, *With an Essay on Style*, *Plato and Platonism*, and *The Child in the House*. Among the manuscripts left at Pater's death was the unfinished *Gaston de Latour*, a novel of France in the sixteenth century, which contains a vivid portrait of Montaigne.

The popular selection from Pater is the essay on Leonardo da Vinci, with the all-too-familiar description of the Mona Lisa, from the *Renaissance*, but we present instead the Conclusion of the *Renaissance* which was a veritable *credo* for the young English aesthetes of seventy years ago.

Conclusion of the Renaissance

TO REGARD all things and principles of things as inconstant modes or fashions has more and more become the tendency of modern thought. Let us begin with that which is without—our physical life. Fix upon it in one of its more exquisite intervals, the moment, for instance, of delicious recoil from the flood of water in summer heat. What is the whole physical life in that moment but a combination of natural elements to which science gives their names? But those elements, phosphorus and lime and delicate fibres, are present not in the human body alone—we detect them in places most remote from it. Our physical life is a perpetual motion of them—the passage of the blood, the waste and repairing of the lenses of the eye, the modification of the tissues of the brain under every ray of light and sound—processes which science reduces to simpler and more elementary forces. Like the elements of which we are composed, the action of these forces extends beyond us—it rusts iron and ripens corn. Far out on every side of us those elements are broadcast, driven in many currents, and birth and gesture and death and the springing of violets from the grave are but a few out of ten thousand resultant combinations. That clear, perpetual outline of face and limb is but an image of ours, under which we group them—a design in a web, the actual threads of which pass out beyond it. This at least of flame-like our life has, that it is but the concurrence, renewed from moment to moment, of forces parting sooner or later on their ways.

Or, if we begin with the inward world of thought and feeling, the whirlpool is still more rapid, the flame more eager and devouring. There it is no longer the gradual darkening of the eye, the gradual fading of colour from the wall—move-

ments of the shore-side, where the water flows down indeed, though in apparent rest—but the race of the mid-stream, a drift of momentary acts of sight and passion and thought At first sight experience seems to bury us under a flood of external objects, pressing upon us with a sharp and importunate reality, calling us out of ourselves in a thousand forms of action But when reflexion begins to play upon those objects they are dissipated under its influence, the cohesive force seems suspended like some trick of magic, each object is loosed into a group of impressions—colour, odour, texture—in the mind of the observer And if we continue to dwell in thought on this world, not of objects in the solidity with which language invests them, but of impressions, unstable, flickering, inconsistent, which burn and are extinguished with our consciousness of them, it contracts still further, the whole scope of observation is dwarfed into the narrow chamber of the individual mind Experience, already reduced to a group of impressions, is ringed round for each one of us by that thick wall of personality through which no real voice has ever pierced on its way to us, or from us to that which we can only conjecture to be without Every one of those impressions is the impression of the individual in his isolation, each mind keeping as a solitary prisoner its own dream of a world Analysis goes a step farther still, and assures us that those impressions of the individual mind to which, for each one of us, experience dwindles down, are in perpetual flight; that each of them is limited by time, and that as time is infinitely divisible, each of them is infinitely divisible also, all that is actual in it being a single moment, gone while we try to apprehend it, of which it may ever be more truly said that it has ceased to be than that it is To such a tremulous wisp constantly re-forming itself on the stream, to a single sharp impression, with a sense in it, a relic more or less fleeting, of such moments gone by, what is real in our life fines itself down It is with this movement, with the passage and dissolution of impressions, images, sensations, that analysis leaves off—that continual vanishing away, that strange, perpetual weaving and unweaving of ourselves.

Philosophiren, says Novalis, *ist dephlegmatisiren, vivificiren* The service of philosophy, of speculative culture, towards the human spirit, is to rouse, to startle it to a life of constant and eager observation Every moment some form grows perfect in hand or face; some tone on the hills or the sea is choicer than the rest, some mood of passion or insight or intellectual excitement is irresistibly real and attractive to us,—for that moment only Not the fruit of experience, but experience itself, is the end A counted number of pulses only is given to us of a variegated, dramatic life How may we see in them all that is to be seen in them by the finest senses? How shall we pass most swiftly from point to point, and be present always at the focus where the greatest number of vital forces unite in their purest energy?

To burn always with this hard, gemlike flame, to maintain this ecstasy, is success in life In a sense it might even be said that our failure is to form habits for, after all, habit is relative to a stereotyped world, and meantime it is only the roughness of the eye that makes any two persons, things, situations, seem alike While all melts under our feet, we may well grasp at any exquisite passion, or any contribution to knowledge that seems by a lifted horizon to set the spirit free for a moment, or any stirring of the senses, strange dyes, strange colours, and curious odours, or work of the artist's hands, or the face of one's friend Not to discriminate every moment some passionate attitude in those about us, and in the very brilliancy of their gifts some tragic dividing of forces on their ways, is, on this short day of frost and sun, to sleep before evening With this sense of the splendour of our experience and of its awful brevity, gathering all we are into one desperate effort to see and touch, we shall hardly have time to make theories about the things we see and touch What we have to do is to be for ever curiously testing new opinions and courting new impressions, never acquiescing in a facile orthodoxy of Comte, or of Hegel, or of our own Philosophical theories or ideas, as points of view, instruments of criticism, may help us to gather up what might otherwise pass unregarded by us "Philosophy is the microscope of thought."

The theory or idea or system which requires of us the sacrifice of any part of this experience, in consideration of some interest into which we cannot enter, or some abstract theory we have not identified with ourselves, or of what is only conventional, has no real claim upon us

One of the most beautiful passages of Rousseau is that in the sixth book of the *Confessions*, where he describes the awakening in him of the literary sense An undefinable taint of death had clung always about him, and now in early manhood he believed himself smitten by mortal disease He asked himself how he might make as much as possible of the interval that remained, and he was not biassed by anything in his previous life when he decided that it must be by intellectual excitement, which he found just then in the clear, fresh writings of Voltaire Well! we are all *condamnés* as Victor Hugo says we are all under sentence of death but with a sort of indefinite reprieve—*les hommes sont tous condamnés à mort avec des sursis indéfinis* we have an interval, and then our place knows us no more Some spend this interval in listlessness, some in high passions, the wisest, at least among "the children of this world," in art and song For our one chance lies in expanding that interval in getting as many pulsations as possible into the given time Great passions may give us this quickened sense of life, ecstasy and sorrow of love, the various forms of enthusiastic activity, disinterested or otherwise, which come naturally to many of us Only be sure it is passion—that it does yield you this fruit of a quickened, multiplied consciousness Of such wisdom, the poetic passion, the desire of beauty, the love of art for its own sake, has most For art comes to you proposing frankly to give nothing but the highest quality to your moments as they pass, and simply for those moments' sake

Robert Louis Stevenson

IN one of his later essays, "A College Magazine," Robert Louis Stevenson (1850-94) confessed "All through my boyhood and youth, I was known and pointed out for the pattern of an idler, and yet I was always busy on my own private end, which was to learn to write I have thus played the sedulous ape to Hazlitt, to Lamb, to Wordsworth, to Sir Thomas Browne, to Defoe, to Hawthorne, to Montaigne, to Baudelaire and to Obermann" All his life he struggled with ill health, with the tuberculosis that killed him at forty-four

Too frail to go on with the family profession of civil engineering, too indifferent to the law to practice it after he had been admitted to the bar, he began to contribute to *The Cornhill* some of those charming essays which were later collected in *Virginibus puerisque* (1881) and *Familiar Studies of Men and Books* Now began also those restless wanderings in France, Belgium and Germany which led to *An Inland Voyage* and *Travels with a Donkey*, and which also led to his meeting with Mrs Fanny Van de Grift Osbourne of California When news of her illness in San Francisco reached him in 1879, he rushed across the Atlantic by emigrant ship and across the continent by emigrant train, reaching the coast almost dead from exhaustion Mrs Osbourne meanwhile, recovered from her recent illness, received a divorce and married Stevenson in the spring of 1880 After a honeymoon devoted to his convalescence in mining camps north of San Francisco, they returned to Europe for reconciliation with his family and the desperate quest for health in Switzerland, in France, in Scotland

In 1883 he finally captured the public with *Treasure Island* and increased his popularity three years later with *Kidnapped*

and *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*. But fame and money did not dispel the dread. Perhaps health lay in the far Pacific. The Stevensons left Europe in 1887, stopped for a year at a Saranac sanitarium, where he wrote a monthly article for high payments, and at last sailed through the Golden Gate in their own yacht. One more year of uncertain wanderings brought them in 1890 to Samoa where they built a spacious house and lived in princely splendor until his death of apoplexy in 1890. The gaunt, gallant, theatrical romancer—the uncrowned king of Samoa—the sailor was “home from the sea.”

Three delightful essays of Stevenson’s are often anthologized—“Aes Triplex,” “An Apology for Idlers” and “Walking Tours”—but we include here “The Lantern-bearers,” a less familiar piece, “which I really think deserves to become immortal,” said William James, “both for the truth of its matter and the excellence of its form.”

The Lantern-Bearers

I

THESE boys congregated every autumn about a certain easterly fisher-village, where they tasted in a high degree the glory of existence. The place was created seemingly on purpose for the diversion of young gentlemen. A street or two of houses, mostly red and many of them tiled, a number of fine trees clustered about the manse and the kirkyard, and turning the chief street into a shady alley, many little gardens more than usually bright with flowers, nets a-drying, and fisher-wives scolding in the backward parts, a smell of fish, a genial smell of seaweed, whiffs of blowing sand at the street-corners, shops with golf-balls and bottled lollipops, another shop with penny pickwicks (that remarkable cigar) and the *London Journal*, dear to me for its startling pictures, and a few novels, dear for their suggestive names such, as well as memory serves me, were the ingredients of the town. These, you are to conceive posted on a spit between two sandy bays, and sparsely flanked with villas—enough for the boys to lodge in with their subsidiary parents, not enough (not yet enough) to cocknify the scene a haven in the rocks in front in front of that, a file of gray islets to the left, endless links and sand wreaths, a wilderness of hiding-holes, alive with popping rabbits and soaring gulls to the right, a range of seaward crags, one rugged brow beyond another, the ruins of a mighty and ancient fortress on the brink of one coves between—now charmed into sunshine quiet, now whistling with wind and clamorous with bursting surges, the dens and sheltered hollows redolent of thyme and southernwood, the air at the cliff's edge brisk and clean and pungent of the sea—in front of all, the Bass Rock, tilted seaward like a doubtful bather, the surf ringing it with white, the solan-geese hanging round its sum-

mit like a great and glittering smoke This choice piece of sea-board was sacred, besides, to the wrecker, and the Bass, in the eye of fancy, still flew the colours of King James, and in the ear of fancy the arches of Tantallon still rang with horse-shoe iron, and echoed to the commands of Bell-the-Cat.

There was nothing to mar your days, if you were a boy summering in that part, but the embarrassment of pleasure You might golf if you wanted, but I seem to have been better employed You might secrete yourself in the Lady's Walk, a certain sunless dingle of elders, all mossed over by the damp as green as grass, and dotted here and there by the streamside with roofless walls, the cold homes of anchorites To fit themselves for life, and with a special eye to acquire the art of smoking, it was even common for the boys to harbour there, and you might have seen a single penny pickwick, honestly shared in lengths with a blunt knife, bestrew the glen with these apprentices Again, you might join our fishing parties, where we sat perched as thick as solan geese, a covey of little anglers, boy and girl, angling over each other's heads, to the much entanglement of lines and loss of podleys and consequent shrill recrimination—shrill as the geese themselves Indeed, had that been all, you might have done this often, but though fishing be a fine pastime, the podley is scarce to be regarded as a dainty for the table, and it was a point of honour that a boy should eat all that he had taken Or again, you might climb the Law, where the whale's jaw-bone stood landmark in the buzzing wind, and behold the face of many counties, and the smoke and spires of many towns, and the sails of distant ships You might bathe, now in the flaws of fine weather, that we pathetically call our summer, now in a gale of wind, with the sand scourging your bare hide, your clothes thrashing abroad from underneath their guardian stone, the froth of the great breakers casting you headlong ere it had drowned your knees Or you might explore the tidal rocks, above all in the ebb of springs, when the very roots of the hills were for the nonce discovered, following my leader from one group to another, groping in slippery tangle for the wreck of ships, wading in pools after

the abominable creatures of the sea, and ever with an eye cast backward on the march of the tide and the menaced line of your retreat. And then you might go Crusoeing, a word that covers all extempore eating in the open air digging perhaps a house under the margin of the links, kindling a fire of the sea-ware, and cooking apples there—if they were truly apples, for I sometimes suppose the merchant must have played us off with some inferior and quite local fruit, capable of resolving, in the neighbourhood of fire, into mere sand and smoke and iodine, or perhaps pushing to Tantallon, you might lunch on sandwiches and visions in the grassy court, while the wind hummed in the crumbling turrets, or clambering along the coast, eat geans¹ (the worst, I must suppose, in Christendom) from an adventurous gean tree that had taken root under a cliff, where it was shaken with an ague of east wind, and silvered after gales with salt, and grew so foreign among its bleak surroundings that to eat of its produce was an adventure in itself.

There are mingled some dismal memories with so many that were joyous. Of the fisher-wife, for instance, who had cut her throat at Carty Bay, and of how I ran with the other children to the top of the Quadrant, and beheld a posse of silent people escorting a cart, and on the cart, bound in a chair, her throat bandaged, and the bandage all bloody—horror!—the fisher-wife herself, who continued thenceforth to hag-ride my thoughts, and even to-day (as I recall the scene) darkens daylight. She was lodged in the little old jail in the chief street, but whether or no she died there, with a wise terror of the worst, I never inquired. She had been tippling, it was but a dingy tragedy, and it seems strange and hard that, after all these years, the poor crazy sinner should be still pilloried on her cart in the scrap-book of my memory. Nor shall I readily forget a certain house in the Quadrant where a visitor died, and a dark old woman continued to dwell alone with the dead body, nor how this old woman conceived a hatred to myself and one of my cousins, and

¹ Wild cherries.

in the dread hour of the dusk, as we were clambering on the garden-walls, opened a window in that house of mortality and cursed us in a shrill voice and with a marrowy choice of language It was a pair of very colourless urchins that fled down the lane from this remarkable experience! But I recall with a more doubtful sentiment, compounded out of fear and exultation, the coil of equinoctial tempests, trumpeting squalls, scouring flaws of rain, the boats with their reefed lugsails scudding for the harbour mouth, where danger lay, for it was hard to make when the wind had any east in it, the wives clustered with blowing shawls at the pier-head, where (if fate was against them) they might see boat and husband and sons—their whole wealth and their whole family—engulfed under their eyes, and (what I saw but once) a troop of neighbours forcing such an unfortunate homeward, and she squalling and battling in their midst, a figure scarcely human, a tragic Maenad.

These are things that I recall with interest, but what my memory dwells upon the most, I have been all this while withholding. It was a sport peculiar to the place, and indeed to a week or so of our two months' holiday there. Maybe it still flourishes in its native spot, for boys and their pastimes are swayed by periodic forces inscrutable to man, so that tops and marbles reappear in their due season, regular like the sun and moon, and the harmless art of knucklebones has seen the fall of the Roman empire and the rise of the United States. It may still flourish in its native spot, but nowhere else, I am persuaded, for I tried myself to introduce it on Tweed-side, and was defeated lamentably, its charm being quite local, like a country wine that cannot be exported.

The idle manner of it was this —

Toward the end of September, when schooltime was drawing near and the nights were already black, we would begin to sally from our respective villas, each equipped with a tin bull's-eye lantern. The thing was so well known that it had worn a rut in the commerce of Great Britain, and the grocers, about the due time, began to garnish their windows with our particular brand of luminary. We wore them buckled to the

waist upon a cricket belt, and over them, such was the rigour of the game, a buttoned top-coat They smelled noisomely of blistered tin, they never burned aright, though they would always burn our fingers, their use was naught, the pleasure of them merely fanciful, and yet a boy with a bull's-eye under his top-coat asked for nothing more The fishermen used lanterns about their boats, and it was from them, I suppose, that we had got the hint, but theirs were not bull's-eyes, nor did we ever play at being fishermen The police carried them at their belts, and we had plainly copied them in that, yet we did not pretend to be policemen Burglars, indeed, we may have had some haunting thoughts of, and we had certainly an eye to past ages when lanterns were more common, and to certain story-books in which we had found them to figure very largely But take it for all in all, the pleasure of the thing was substantive, and to be a boy with a bull's-eye under his top-coat was good enough for us

When two of these asses met, there would be an anxious "Have you got your lantern?" and a gratified "Yes!" That was the shibboleth, and very needful too, for, as it was the rule to keep our glory contained, none could recognise a lantern-bearer, unless (like the pole-cat) by the smell Four or five would sometimes climb into the belly of a ten-man lugger, with nothing but the thwarts above them—for the cabin was usually locked, or choose out some hollow of the links where the wind might whistle overhead There the coats would be unbuttoned and the bull's-eyes discovered, and in the chequering glimmer, under the huge windy hall of the night, and cheered by a rich steam of toasting tinware, these fortunate young gentlemen would crouch together in the cold sand of the links or on the scaly bilges of the fishing-boat, and delight themselves with inappropriate talk Woe is me that I may not give some specimens—some of their foresights of life, or deep inquiries into the rudiments of man and nature, these were so fiery and so innocent, they were so richly silly, so romantically young But the talk, at any rate, was but a condiment, and these gatherings themselves only accidents in the career of the lantern-bearer The essence of this bliss

was to walk by yourself in the black night, the slide shut, the top-coat buttoned, not a ray escaping, whether to conduct your footsteps or to make your glory public a mere pillar of darkness in the dark, and all the while, deep down in the privacy of your fool's heart, to know you had a bull's-eye at your belt, and to exult and sing over the knowledge

II

It is said that a poet has died young in the breast of the most stolid It may be contended, rather, that this (somewhat minor) bard in almost every case survives, and is the spice of life to his possessor Justice is not done to the versatility and the unplumbed childishness of man's imagination His life from without may seem but a rude mound of mud, there will be some golden chamber at the heart of it, in which he dwells delighted, and for as dark as his pathway seems to the observer, he will have some kind of a bull's-eye at his belt

It would be hard to pick out a career more cheerless than that of Dancer, the miser, as he figures in the "Old Bailey Reports," a prey to the most sordid persecutions, the butt of his neighbourhood, betrayed by his hired man, his house beleaguered by the impish school-boy, and he himself grinding and fuming and impotently fleeing to the law against these pin-pricks You marvel at first that any one should willingly prolong a life so destitute of charm and dignity, and then you call to memory that had he chosen, had he ceased to be a miser, he could have been freed at once from these trials, and might have built himself a castle and gone escorted by a squadron For the love of more recondite joys, which we cannot estimate, which, it may be, we should envy, the man had willingly foregone both comfort and consideration "His mind to him a kingdom was", and sure enough, digging into that mind, which seems at first a dust-heap, we unearth some priceless jewels For Dancer must have had the love of power and the disdain of using it, a noble character in itself; disdain of many pleasures, a chief part of what is commonly called wisdom, disdain of the inevitable end, that

finest trait of mankind, scorn of men's opinions, another element of virtue, and at the back of all, a conscience just like yours and mine, whining like a cur, swindling like a thimble-rigger, but still pointing (there or thereabout) to some conventional standard. Here were a cabinet portrait to which Hawthorne perhaps had done justice, and yet not Hawthorne either, for he was mildly minded, and it lay not in him to create for us that throb of the miser's pulse, his fretful energy of gusto, his vast arms of ambition clutching in he knows not what insatiable, insane, a god with a muck-rake. Thus, at least, looking in the bosom of the miser, consideration detects the poet in the full tide of life, with more, indeed, of the poetic fire than usually goes to epics, and tracing that mean man about his cold hearth, and to and fro in his uncomfortable house, spies within him a blazing bonfire of delight. And so with others, who do not live by bread alone, but by some cherished and perhaps fantastic pleasure, who are meat salesmen to the external eye, and possibly to themselves are Shakespeares, Napoleons, or Beethovens, who have not one virtue to rub against another in the field of active life, and yet perhaps, in the life of contemplation, sit with the saints. We see them on the street, and we can count their buttons, but heaven knows in what they pride themselves! heaven knows where they have set their treasure!

There is one fable that touches very near the quick of life the fable of the monk who passed into the woods, heard a bird break into song, hearkened for a trill or two, and found himself on his return a stranger at his convent gates, for he had been absent fifty years, and of all his comrades there survived but one to recognize him. It is not only in the woods that this enchanter carols, though perhaps he is native there. He sings in the more doleful places. The miser hears him and chuckles, and the days are moments. With no more apparatus than an ill-smelling lantern I have evoked him on the naked links. All life that is not merely mechanical is spun out of two strands seeking for that bird and hearing him. And it is just this that makes life so hard to value, and the delight of each so incomunicable. And just a knowledge of this, and a re-

membrance of those fortunate hours in which the bird has sung to us, that fills us with such wonder when we turn the pages of the realist. There, to be sure, we find a picture of life in so far as it consists of mud and of old iron, cheap desires and cheap fears, that which we are ashamed to remember and that which we are careless whether we forget, but of the note of that time-devouring nightingale we hear no news

The case of these writers of romance is most obscure. They have been boys and youths, they have lingered outside the window of the beloved, who was then most probably writing to some one else, they have sat before a sheet of paper, and felt themselves mere continents of congested poetry, not one line of which would flow, they have walked alone in the woods, they have walked in cities under the countless lamps, they have been to sea, they have hated, they have feared, they have longed to knife a man, and maybe done it, the wild taste of life has stung their palate. Or, if you deny them all the rest, one pleasure at least they have tasted to the full—their books are there to prove it—the keen pleasure of successful literary composition. And yet they fill the globe with volumes, whose cleverness inspires me with despairing admiration, and whose consistent falsity to all I care to call existence, with despairing wrath. If I had no better hope than to continue to revolve among the dreary and petty businesses, and to be moved by the paltry hopes and fears with which they surround and animate their heroes, I declare I would die now. But there has never an hour of mine gone quite so dully yet, if it were spent waiting at a railway junction, I would have some scattering thoughts, I could count some grains of memory, compared to which the whole of one of these romances seems but dross.

These writers would retort (if I take them properly) that this was very true, that it was the same with themselves and other persons of (what they call) the artistic temperament, that in this we were exceptional, and should apparently be ashamed of ourselves, but that our works must deal exclusively with (what they call) the average man, who was a

prodigious dull fellow, and quite dead to all but the paltriest considerations I accept the issue We can only know others by ourselves The artistic temperament (a plague on the expression!) does not make us different from our fellow-men, or it would make us incapable of writing novels, and the average man (a murrau on the word!) is just like you and me, or he would not be average It was Whitman who stamped a kind of Birmingham sacredness upon the latter phrase, but Whitman knew very well, and showed very nobly, that the average man was full of joys and full of a poetry of his own And this harping on life's dulness and man's meanness is a loud profession of incompetence, it is one of two things the cry of the blind eye, *I cannot see*, or the complaint of the dumb tongue, *I cannot utter* To draw a life without delights is to prove I have not realised it. To picture a man without some sort of poetry—well, it goes near to prove my case, for it shows an author may have little enough To see Dancer only as a dirty, old, small-minded, impotently fuming man, in a dirty house, besieged by Harrow boys, and probably beset by small attorneys, is to show myself as keen an observer as

the Harrow boys But these young gentlemen (with a more becoming modesty) were content to pluck Dancer by the coat-tails, they did not suppose they had surprised his secret or could put him living in a book and it is there my error would have lain Or say that in the same romance—I continue to call these books romances, in the hope of giving pain—say that in the same romance, which now begins really to take shape, I should leave to speak of Dancer, and follow instead the Harrow boys, and say that I came on some such business as that of my lantern-bearers on the links, and described the boys as very cold, spat upon by flurries of rain, and drearily surrounded, all of which they were, and their talk as silly and indecent, which it certainly was I might upon these lines, and had I Zola's genius, turn out, in a page or so, a gem of literary art, render the lantern-light with the touches of a master, and lay on the indecency with the ungrudging hand of love, and when all was done, what a triumph would my picture be of shallowness and dulness! how it would

have missed the point! how it would have belied the boys! To the ear of the stenographer, the talk is merely silly and indecent, but ask the boys themselves, and they are discussing (as it is highly proper they should) the possibilities of existence To the eye of the observer they are wet and cold and drearily surrounded, but ask themselves, and they are in the heaven of a recondite pleasure, the ground of which is an ill-smelling lantern

III

For, to repeat, the ground of a man's joy is often hard to hit It may hinge at times upon a mere accessory, like the lantern, it may reside, like Dancer's, in the mysterious inwards of psychology It may consist with perpetual failure, and find exercise in the continued chase It has so little bond with externals (such as the observer scribbles in his notebook) that it may even touch them not; and the man's true life, for which he consents to live, lie altogether in the field of fancy The clergyman, in his spare hours, may be winning battles, the farmer sailing ships, the banker reaping triumph in the arts all leading another life, plying another trade from that they chose, like the poet's housebuilder, who, after all is cased in stone,

"By his fireside, as impotent fancy prompts,
Rebuilds it to his liking"

In such a case the poetry runs underground The observer (poor soul with his documents!) is all abroad For to look at the man is but to court deception We shall see the trunk from which he draws his nourishment, but he himself is above and abroad in the green dome of foliage, hummed through by winds and nested in by nightingales And the true realism were that of the poets, to climb up after him like a squirrel, and catch some glimpse of the heaven for which he lives. And the true realism, always and everywhere, is that of the poets:

to find out where joy resides, and give it a voice far beyond singing

For to miss the joy is to miss all. In the joy of the actors lies the sense of any action. That is the explanation, that the excuse. To one who has not the secret of the lanterns, the scene upon the links is meaningless. And hence the haunting and truly spectral unreality of realistic books. Hence, when we read the English realists, the incredulous wonder with which we observe the hero's constancy under the submerging tide of dulness, and how he bears up with his jibbing sweetheart, and endures the chatter of idiot girls, and stands by his whole unfeatured wilderness of an existence, instead of seeking relief in drink or foreign travel. Hence in the French, in that meat-market of middle-aged sensuality, the disgusted surprise with which we see the hero drift sidelong, and practically quite untempted, into every description of misconduct and dishonour. In each, we miss the personal poetry, the enchanted atmosphere, that rainbow work of fancy that clothes what is naked and seems to ennable what is base, in each, life falls dead like dough, instead of soaring away like a balloon into the colours of the sunset, each is true, each inconceivable, for no man lives in the external truth, among salts and acids, but in the warm, phantasmagoric chamber of his brain, with the painted windows and the storied walls.

Of this falsity we have had a recent example from a man who knows far better—Tolstoi's *Powers of Darkness*. Here is a piece full of force and truth, yet quite untrue. For before Mikita was led into so dire a situation he was tempted, and temptations are beautiful at least in part, and a work which dwells on the ugliness of crime and gives no hint of any loveliness in the temptation, sinks against the modesty of life, and even when a Tolstoi writes it, sinks to melodrama. The peasants are not understood, they saw their life in fairer colours, even the deaf girl was clothed in poetry for Mikita, or he had never fallen. And so, once again, even an Old Bailey melodrama, without some brightness of poetry and lustre of existence, falls into the inconceivable and ranks with fairy tales.

IV

In nobler books we are moved with something like the emotions of life, and this emotion is very variously provoked. We are so moved when Levine labours in the field, when André sinks beyond emotion, when Richard Feverel and Lucy Desborough meet beside the river, when Antony, "not cowardly, puts off his helmet," when Kent has infinite pity on the dying Lear, when, in Dostoeffsky's *Despised and Rejected*, the uncomplaining hero drains his cup of suffering and virtue. These are notes that please the great heart of man. Not only love, and the fields, and the bright face of danger, but sacrifice and death and unmerited suffering humbly supported, touch in us the vein of the poetic. We love to think of them, we long to try them, we are humbly hopeful that we may prove heroes also.

We have heard, perhaps, too much of lesser matters. Here is the door, here is the open air. *Itur in antiquam silvam*

ACROSS THE PLAINS (1892)

Alice Meynell

ON receiving a copy of Mrs Alice Meynell's fourth volume of essays, *The Spirit of Place*, originally contributed to periodicals, the aged novelist George Meredith, wrote to her "I am grateful for the gift of the little book I knew the contents, and I read them again with the first freshness, the delight in the delicacy of the touch that can be so firm It is the style of a queenly lady walking without her robes"

Alice Christiana Meynell (1850-1922), the daughter of T J Thompson, was born in England but brought up in Italy under her father's tutelage. She was converted to Catholicism in her early twenties and a few years later married Wilfrid Meynell who was the founder and editor of *Merry England*, a Catholic paper which published the early works of W H Hudson and Hilaire Belloc. The delicacy and economy of the poems which first won her a small group of devoted readers she carried over into her numerous essays.

It is tempting to include here the title essays of three of her collections, "The Rhythm of Life," "The Colour of Life," or "The Spirit of Place," but we have instead a gallant vignette on Doctor Johnson's wife.

Mrs Meynell was a great admirer of G K Chesterton and she once remarked "If I had been a man and large, I should have been Chesterton."

Mrs. Johnson

THIS paper shall not be headed "Tetty" What may be a graceful enough freedom with the wives of other men shall be prohibited in the case of Johnson's, she with whose name no writer until now has scrupled to take freedoms whereto all graces were lacking "Tetty" it should not be, if for no other reason, for this—that the chance of writing "Tetty" as a title is a kind of facile literary opportunity, it shall be denied The Essay owes thus much amends of deliberate care to Dr Johnson's wife But indeed, the reason is graver What wish would he have had but that the language in the making whereof he took no ignoble part should somewhere, at some time, treat his only friend with ordinary honour?

Men who would trust Dr Johnson with their orthodoxy, with their vocabulary, and with the most intimate vanity of their human wishes, refuse, with every mark of insolence, to trust him in regard to his wife On that one point no reverence is paid to him, no deference, no respect, not so much as the credit due to our common sanity Yet he is not reviled on account of his Thrale—nor, indeed, is his Thrale now seriously reproached for her Piozzi It is true that Macaulay, preparing himself and his reader "in his well-known way" (as a rustic of Mr Hardy's might have it) for the recital of her second marriage, says that it would have been well if she had been laid beside the kind and generous Thrale when, in the prime of her life, he died But Macaulay has not left us heirs to his indignation His well-known way was to exhaust those possibilities of effect in which the commonplace is so rich And he was permitted to point his paragraphs as he would, not only by calling Mrs Thrale's attachment to her second

husband "a degrading passion," but by summoning a chorus of "all London" to the same purpose She fled, he tells us, from the laughter and hisses of her countrymen and country-women to a land where she was unknown Thus when Macaulay chastises Mrs Elizabeth Porter for marrying Johnson, he is not inconsistent, for he pursues Mrs Thrale with equal rigour for her audacity in keeping gaiety and grace in her mind and manners longer than Macaulay liked to see such ornaments added to the charm of twice "married brows"

It is not so with succeeding essayists One of these minor biographers is so gentle as to call the attachment of Mrs Thrale and Piozzi "a mutual affection" He adds, "No one who has had some experience of life will be inclined to condemn Mrs Thrale" But there is no such courtesy, even from him, for Mrs Johnson Neither to him nor to any other writer has it yet occurred that if England loves her great Englishman's memory, she owes not only courtesy, but gratitude, to the only woman who loved him while there was yet time

Not a thought of that debt has stayed the alacrity with which a caricature has been acclaimed as the only possible portrait of Mrs Johnson Garrick's school reminiscences would probably have made a much more charming woman grotesque Garrick is welcome to his remembrances, we may even reserve for ourselves the liberty of envying those who heard him But honest laughter should not fall into that tone of common antithesis which seems to say, "See what are the absurdities of the great! Such is life! On this one point we, even we, are wiser than Dr Johnson—we know how grotesque was his wife We know something of the privacies of her toilet-table We are able to compare her figure with the figures we, unlike him in his youth, have had the opportunity of admiring—the figures of the well-bred and well-dressed" It is a sorry success to be able to say so much

But in fact such a triumph belongs to no man When Samuel Johnson, at twenty-six, married his wife, he gave the dull an advantage over himself which none but the dullest will take He chose, for love, a woman who had the wit to admire him

at first meeting, and in spite of first sight "That," she said to her daughter, "is the most sensible man I ever met" He was penniless She had what was no mean portion for those times and those conditions, and, granted that she was affected, and provincial, and short, and all the rest with which she is charged, she was probably not without suitors, nor do her defects or faults seem to have been those of an unadmired or neglected woman. Next, let us remember what was the aspect of Johnson's form and face, even in his twenties, and how little he could have touched the senses of a widow fond of externals This one loved him, accepted him, made him happy, gave to one of the noblest of all English hearts the one love of its sombre life And English literature has had no better phrase for her than Macaulay's—"She accepted, with a readiness which did her little honour, the addresses of a suitor who might have been her son."

Her readiness did her incalculable honour But it is at least worth remembering that Johnson had first done her incalculable honour. No one has given to man or woman the right to judge as to the worthiness of her who received it The meanest man is generally allowed his own counsel as to his own wife, one of the greatest of men has been denied it. "The lover," says Macaulay, "continued to be under the illusions of the wedding day till the lady died" What is so graciously said is not enough. He was under those "illusions" until he too died, when he had long passed her latest age, and was therefore able to set right that balance of years which has so much irritated the impertinent Johnson passed from this life twelve years older than she, and so for twelve years his constant eyes had to turn backwards to dwell upon her. Time gave him a younger wife

And here I will put into Mrs Johnson's mouth, that mouth to which no one else has ever attributed any beautiful sayings, the words of Marceline Desbordes-Valmore to the young husband she loved "Older than thou! Let me never see thou knowest it. Forget it! I will remember it, to die before thy death"

Macaulay, in his unerring effectiveness, uses Johnson's

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short sight for an added affront to Mrs Johnson The bridegroom was too weak of eyesight "to distinguish ceruse from natural bloom" Nevertheless, he saw well enough, when he was old, to distinguish Mrs Thrale's dresses He reproved her for wearing a dark dress, it was unsuitable, he said, for her size, a little creature should show gay colours "like an insect." We are not called upon to admire his wife, why, then, our taste being thus uncompromised, do we not suffer him to admire her? It is the most gratuitous kind of intrusion Moreover, the biographers are eager to permit that touch of romance and grace in his relations to Mrs Thrale, which they officially deny in the case of Mrs Johnson But the difference is all on the other side He would not have bidden his wife dress like an insect. Mrs Thrale was to him "the first of womankind" only because his wife was dead

Beauclerc, we learn, was wont to cap Garrick's mimicry of Johnson's love-making by repeating the words of Johnson himself in after-years—"It was a love-match on both sides" And obviously he was as strange a lover as they said Who doubted it? Was there any other woman in England to give such a suitor the opportunity of eternal love? "A life radically wretched," was the life of this master of Letters, but she, who has received nothing in return except ignominy from these unthankful Letters, had been alone to make it otherwise Well for him that he married so young as to earn the ridicule of all the biographers in England, for by doing so he, most happily, possessed his wife for nearly twenty years I have called her his only friend So indeed she was, though he had followers, disciples, rivals, competitors, and companions, many degrees of admirers, a biographer, a patron, and a public He had also the houseful of sad old women who quarrelled under his beneficent protection But what friend had he? He was "solitary" from the day she died

Let us consider under what solemn conditions and in what immortal phrase the word "solitary" stands He wrote it, all Englishmen know where. He wrote it in the hour of that melancholy triumph when he had been at last set free from the dependence upon hope He hoped no more, and he needed

not to hope The "notice" of Lord Chesterfield had been too long deferred, it was granted at last, when it was a flattery which Johnson's court of friends would applaud But not for their sake was it welcome To no living ear would he bring it and report it with delight.

He was indifferent, he was known The sensitiveness to pleasure was gone, and the sensitiveness to pain, slights, and neglect would thenceforth be suffered to rest, no man in England would put that to proof again No man in England, did I say? But, indeed, that is not so No slight to him, to his person, or to his fame could have had power to cause him pain more sensibly than the customary, habitual, ready-made ridicule that has been cast by posterity upon her whom he loved for twenty years, prayed for during thirty-two years more, who satisfied one of the saddest human hearts, but to whom the world, assiduous to admire him, hardly accords human dignity He wrote praises of her manners and of her person for her tomb But her epitaph, that does not name her, is in the greatest of English prose What was favour to him? "I am indifferent . . . I am known. . . . I am solitary, and cannot impart it."

ESSAYS (1914)

George Bernard Shaw

GEORGE BERNARD SHAW (1856-1951) was twenty when he and his mother left Ireland for London. But he did not conquer England over-night. He wrote five unsuccessful novels. He wrote pamphlets and made innumerable speeches for the Fabian Socialists. He advocated the new music of Wagner and the new drama of Ibsen and began to exemplify the new drama himself with *Widower's Houses* (1892), *The Philanderer* (1892), *Mrs Warren's Profession* (1893), *Arms and the Man* (1894), *Candida* (1894), *The Man of Destiny* (1895), and *You Never Can Tell* (1896). Meanwhile he had to make a living and he passed from music and art criticism to dramatic criticism with the *Saturday Review* from 1893 to 1898.

The collected *Dramatic Opinions and Essays* (1907) are more Shavian than one might expect and they are infinitely more readable than old reviews are apt to be. But what are the famous prefaces to Shaw's plays but glorious essays in some of the raciest English prose ever written? The thirty odd pages of the preface to *Man and Superman*, the sixty pages of *Androcles and the Lion*, the hundred pages of *St Joan* are Shaw at his best. But we must forego such epic examples and turn to the dramatic critic of England's *Saturday Review* of some fifty years ago.

Better than Shakespeare

The Pilgrim's Progress a mystery play, with music, in four acts, by G G Collingham, founded on John Bunyan's immortal allegory Olympic Theatre, 24 December, 1896

WHEN I saw a stage version of "The Pilgrim's Progress" announced for production, I shook my head, knowing that Bunyan is far too great a dramatist for our theatre, which has never been resolute enough even in its lewdness and venality to win the respect and interest which positive, powerful wickedness always engages, much less the services of men of heroic conviction. Its greatest catch, Shakespeare, wrote for the theatre because, with extraordinary artistic powers, he understood nothing and believed nothing. Thirty-six big plays in five blank verse acts, and (as Mr Ruskin, I think, once pointed out) not a single hero! Only one man in them all who believes in life, enjoys life, thinks life worth living, and has a sincere, unrhetorical tear dropped over his deathbed, and that man—Falstaff! What a crew they are—these Saturday to Monday athletic stock-broker Orlandoos, these villains, fools, clowns, drunkards, cowards, intriguers, fighters, lovers, patriots, hypochondriacs who mistake themselves (and are mistaken by the author) for philosophers, princes without any sense of public duty, futile pessimists who imagine they are confronting a barren and unmeaning world when they are only contemplating their own worthlessness, self-seekers of all kinds, keenly observed and masterfully drawn from the romantic-commercial point of view. Once or twice we scent among them an anticipation of the crudest side of Ibsen's

polemics on the Woman Question, as in "All's Well that Ends Well," where the man cuts as meanly selfish a figure beside his enlightened lady doctor wife as Helmer beside Nora, or in "Cymbeline," where Posthumus, having, as he believes, killed his wife for inconstancy, speculates for a moment on what his life would have been worth if the same standard of continence had been applied to himself. And certainly no modern study of the voluptuous temperament, and the spurious heroism and heroism which its ecstasies produce, can add much to "Antony and Cleopatra," unless it were some sense of the spuriousness on the author's part. But search for statesmanship, or even citizenship, or any sense of the commonwealth, material or spiritual, and you will not find the making of a decent vestryman or curate in the whole horde. As to faith, hope, courage, conviction, or any of the true heroic qualities, you find nothing but death made sensational, despair made stage-sublime, sex made romantic, and barrenness covered up by sentimentality and the mechanical lilt of blank verse.

All that you miss in Shakespeare you find in Bunyan, to whom the true heroic came quite obviously and naturally. The world was to him a more terrible place than it was to Shakespeare, but he saw through it a path at the end of which a man might look not only forward to the Celestial City, but back on his life and say "Tho' with great difficulty I am got hither, yet now I do not repent me of all the trouble I have been at to arrive where I am. My sword I give to him that shall succeed me in my pilgrimage, and my courage and skill to him that can get them." The heart vibrates like a bell to such utterances as this to turn from it to "Out, out, brief candle," and "The rest is silence," and "We are such stuff as dreams are made on", and "our little life is rounded by a sleep" is to turn from life, strength, resolution, morning air and eternal youth, to the terrors of a drunken nightmare.

Let us descend now to the lower ground where Shakespeare is not disabled by this inferiority in energy and elevation of spirit. Take one of his big fighting scenes, and compare its blank verse, in point of mere rhetorical strenuousness,

with Bunyan's prose Macbeth's famous cue for the fight with Macduff runs thus

"Yet I will try the last before my body
I throw my warlike shield Lay on, Macduff,
And damned be him that first cries Hold, enough!"

Turn from this jingle, dramatically right in feeling, but silly and resourceless in thought and expression, to Apollyon's cue for the fight in the Valley of Humiliation "I am void of fear in this matter Prepare thyself to die, for I swear by my infernal den that thou shalt go no farther here will I spill thy soul" This is the same thing done masterly Apart from its superior grandeur, force, and appropriateness, it is better clap-trap and infinitely better word-music

Shakespeare, fond as he is of describing fights, has hardly ever sufficient energy or reality of imagination to finish without betraying the paper origin of his fancies by dragging in something classical in the style of the Cyclops' hammer falling "On Mars' armor, forged for proof eterne" Hear how Bunyan does it "I fought till my sword did cleave to my hand, and when they were joined together as if the sword grew out of my arm, and when the blood run thorow my fingers, then I fought with most courage" Nowhere in all Shakespeare is there a touch like that of the blood running down through the man's fingers, and his courage rising to passion at it Even in mere technical adaptation to the art of the actor, Bunyan's dramatic speeches are as good as Shakespeare's tirades Only a trained dramatic speaker can appreciate the terse manageableness and effectiveness of such a speech as this, with its grandiose exordium, followed up by its pointed question and its stern threat "By this I perceive thou art one of my subjects, for all that country is mine, and I am the Prince and the God of it How is it then that thou hast ran away from thy King? Were it not that I hope thou mayst do me more service, I would strike thee now at one blow to the ground" Here there is no raving and swearing and rhyming and classical allusion The sentences go straight

to their mark, and their concluding phrases soar like the sunrise, or swing and drop like a hammer, just as the actor wants them

I might multiply these instances by the dozen, but I had rather leave dramatic students to compare the two authors at first-hand. In an article on Bunyan lately published in the "Contemporary Review"—the only article worth reading on the subject I ever saw (yes, thank you, I am quite familiar with Macaulay's patronizing prattle about "The Pilgrim's Progress")—Mr Richard Heath, the historian of the Anabaptists, shows how Bunyan learnt his lesson, not only from his own rough pilgrimage through life, but from the tradition of many an actual journey from real Cities of Destruction (under Alva), with Interpreters' houses and convey of Great-hearts all complete. Against such a man what chance had our poor immortal William, with his "little Latin" (would it had been less, like his Greek!), his heathen mythology, his Plutarch, his Boccaccio, his Holinshed, his circle of London literary wits, soddening their minds with books and their nerves with alcohol (quite like us), and all the rest of his Strand and Fleet Street surroundings, activities, and interests, social and professional, mentionable and unmentionable? Let us applaud him, in due measure, in that he came out of it no blackguardly Bohemian, but a thoroughly respectable snob, raised the desperation and cynicism of its outlook to something like sublimity in his tragedies, dramatized its morbid, self-centered passions and its feeble and shallow speculations with all the force that was in them, disinfected it by copious doses of romantic poetry, fun, and common sense, and gave to its perpetual sex-obsession the relief of individual character and feminine winsomeness. Also—if you are a sufficiently good Whig—that after incarnating the spirit of the whole epoch which began with the sixteenth century and is ending (I hope) with the nineteenth, he is still the idol of all well-read children. But as he never thought a noble life worth living or a great work worth doing, because the commercial profit-and-loss sheet showed that the one did not bring happiness nor the other money, he never struck the

great vein—the vein in which Bunyan told of that “man of a very stout countenance” who went up to the keeper of the book of life and said, not “Out, out, brief candle,” but “Set down my name, sir,” and immediately fell on the armed men and cut his way into heaven after receiving and giving many wounds

DRAMATIC OPINIONS
AND ESSAYS (1907)

Valedictory

21 May, 1898

AS I lie here, helpless and disabled, or, at best, nailed by one foot to the floor like a doomed Strasburg goose, a sense of injury grows on me. For nearly four years—to be precise, since New Year 1895—I have been the slave of the theatre. It has tethered me to the mile radius of foul and sooty air which has its centre in the Strand, as a goat is tethered in the little circle of cropped and trampled grass that makes the meadow ashamed. Every week it clamors for its tale of written words, so that I am like a man fighting a windmill. I have hardly time to stagger to my feet from the knock-down blow of one sail, when the next strikes me down. Now I ask, is it reasonable to expect me to spend my life in this way? For just consider my position. Do I receive any spontaneous recognition for the prodigies of skill and industry I lavish on an unworthy institution and a stupid public? Not a bit of it. half my time is spent in telling people what a clever man I am. It is no use merely doing clever things in England. The English do not know what to think until they are coached, laboriously and insistently for years, in the proper and becoming opinion. For ten years past, with an unprece-

dented pertinacity and obstination, I have been dinging into the public head that I am an extraordinarily witty, brilliant, and clever man That is now part of the public opinion of England, and no power in heaven or on earth will ever change it I may dodder and dote, I may potboil and platitudinize, I may become the butt and chopping-block of all the bright, original spirits of the rising generation, but my reputation shall not suffer it is built up fast and solid, like Shakespeare's, on an impregnable basis of dogmatic reiteration

Unfortunately, the building process has been a most painful one to me, because I am congenitally an extremely modest man Shyness is the form my vanity and self-consciousness take by nature It is humiliating, too, after making the most dazzling displays of professional ability, to have to tell people how clever it all is Besides, they get so tired of it, that finally, without dreaming of disputing the alleged brilliancy, they begin to detest it I sometimes get quite frantic letters from people who feel that they cannot stand me any longer

Then there are the managers Are *they* grateful? No they are simply forbearing Instead of looking up to me as their guide, philosopher and friend, they regard me merely as the author of a series of weekly outrages on their profession and their privacy Worse than the managers are the Shakespearleans When I began to write, William was a divinity and a bore Now he is a fellow-creature, and his plays have reached an unprecedented pitch of popularity And yet his worshippers overwhelm my name with insult

These circumstances will not bear thinking of I have never had time to think of them before, but now I have nothing else to do When a man of normal habits is ill, every one hastens to assure him that he is going to recover When a Vegetarian is ill (which fortunately very seldom happens), every one assures him that he is going to die, and that they told him so, and that it serves him right They implore him to take at least a little gravy, so as to give himself a chance of lasting out the night They tell him awful stories of cases just like his own which ended fatally after indescribable torments, and when he tremblingly inquires whether the victims were not

hardened meat-eaters, they tell him he must not talk, as it is not good for him Ten times a day I am compelled to reflect on my past life, and on the limited prospect of three weeks or so of lingering moribundity which is held up to me as my probable future, with the intensity of a drowning man And I can never justify to myself the spending of four years on dramatic criticism. I have sworn an oath to endure no more of it Never again will I cross the threshold of a theatre The subject is exhausted, and so am I.

Still, the gaiety of nations must not be eclipsed The long string of beautiful ladies who are at present in the square without, awaiting, under the supervision of two gallant policemen, their turn at my bedside, must be reassured when they protest, as they will, that the light of their life will go out if my dramatic articles cease To each of them I will present the flower left by her predecessor, and assure her that there are as good fish in the sea as ever came out of it The younger generation is knocking at the door, and as I open it there steps spriteily in the incomparable Max

For the rest, let Max speak for himself I am off duty for ever, and am going to sleep

DRAMATIC OPINIONS
AND ESSAYS (1907)

Joseph Conrad

THE story of the Polish youth of sixteen who left his land-locked country, entered the French merchant marine, ran arms to Spain in support of the Spanish pretender, fought a duel with an American, and for sixteen years worked on British ships in every part of the world, still seems stranger than any of his fictions. For this was the man, Jozef Korzeniowski (1857-1924) who became an English novelist at the age of thirty-eight, in 1895, when *Almayer's Folly* was published. This was the man who completed (excluding collaborations) thirteen novels, seven volumes of short stories and three volumes of essays. People may quarrel a little as to whether or not Conrad is primarily a writer of sea-stories, whether the shorter works such as *Youth*, *Heart of Darkness* and *The Typhoon* are finer than *Lord Jim*, *The Nigger of the "Narcissus"* and *Nostromo*, but all agree that he deals with noble themes in noble prose—in a world that badly needs nobility.

Ernest Rhys, the distinguished founder and editor of *Everyman's Library* from its inception in 1906 until his death in 1943, also compiled various collections of essays. He once remarked “Joseph Conrad does not occur to us first as an essayist, yet his *Mirror of the Sea* (1906), an essayist's book, is the most intimate of all his works, and his tribute in it to 'The West Wind' a rare bit of eloquence”

Landfalls and Departures

And shippes by the brinke comen and gon,
And in swich forme endure a day or two

—The Frankeleyns Tale

I

LANDFALL and Departure mark the rhythmical swing of a seaman's life and of a ship's career. From land to land is the most concise definition of a ship's earthly fate. A "Departure" is not what a vain people of landsmen may think. The term "Landfall" is more easily understood, you fall in with the land, and it is a matter of a quick eye and of a clear atmosphere. The Departure is not the ship's going away from her port any more than the Landfall can be looked upon as the synonym of arrival. But there is this difference in the Departure that the term does not imply so much a sea event as a definite act entailing a process—the precise observation of certain landmarks by means of the compass card.

Your Landfall, be it a peculiarly shaped mountain, a rocky headland, or a stretch of sand-dunes, you meet at first with a single glance. Further recognition will follow in due course, but essentially a Landfall, good or bad, is made and done with at the first cry of "Land hol". The Departure is distinctly a ceremony of navigation. A ship may have left her port some time before, she may have been at sea, in the fullest sense of the phrase, for days, but, for all that, as long as the coast she was about to leave remained in sight, a southern-going ship of yesterday had not in the sailor's sense begun the enterprise of a passage.

The taking of Departure, if not the last sight of the land, is,

perhaps, the last professional recognition of the land on the part of a sailor It is the technical, as distinguished from the sentimental, "good-by" Henceforth he has done with the coast astern of his ship It is a matter personal to the man. It is not the ship that takes her Departure, the seaman takes his Departure by means of cross-bearings which fix the place of the first tiny pencil-cross on the white expanse of the track-chart, where the ship's position at noon shall be marked by just such another tiny pencil-cross for every day of her passage And there may be sixty, eighty, any number of these crosses on the ship's track from land to land. The greatest number in my experience was a hundred and thirty of such crosses from the pilot station at the Sand Heads in the Bay of Bengal to the Scilly's light. A bad passage .

A Departure, the last professional sight of land, is always good, or at least good enough. For even if the weather is thick, it does not matter much to a ship having all the open sea before her bows A Landfall may be good or bad You encompass the earth with one particular spot of it in your eye. In all the devious tracings the course of a sailing-ship leaves upon the white paper of a chart she is always aiming for that one little spot—maybe a small island in the ocean, a single headland upon the long coast of a continent, a light-house on a bluff, or simply the peaked form of a mountain like an ant heap afloat upon the waters But if you have sighted it on the expected bearing, then that Landfall is good Fogs, snow-storms, gales thick with clouds and rain—those are the enemies of good Landfalls

II

Some commanders of ships take their Departure from the home coast sadly, in a spirit of grief and discontent. They have a wife, children perhaps, some affection at any rate, or perhaps only some pet vice, that must be left behind for a year or more I remember only one man who walked his deck with a springy step, and gave the first course of the passage in an elated voice But he, as I learned afterwards, was leaving

nothing behind him, except a welter of debts and threats of legal proceedings

On the other hand, I have known many captains who, directly their ship had left the narrow waters of the Channel, would disappear from the sight of their ship's company altogether for some three days or more. They would take a long dive, as it were, into their state-room, only to emerge a few days afterwards with a more or less serene brow. Those were the men easy to get on with. Besides, such a complete retirement seemed to imply a satisfactory amount of trust in their officers, and to be trusted displeases no seaman worthy of the name.

On my first voyage, as chief mate with good Captain Mac W____ I remember that I felt quite flattered, and went blithely about my duties, myself a commander for all practical purposes. Still, whatever the greatness of my illusion, the fact remained that the real commander was there, backing up my self-confidence, though invisible to my eyes behind a maple-wood veneered cabin-door with a white china handle.

That is the time, after your Departure is taken, when the spirit of your commander communes with you in a muffled voice, as if from the sanctum sanctorum of a temple, because, call her a temple or a "hell afloat"—as some ships have been called—the captain's state-room is surely the august place in every vessel.

The good Mac W____ would not even come out to his meals, and fed solitarily in his holy of holes from a tray covered with a white napkin. Our steward used to bend an ironic glance at the perfectly empty plates he was bringing out from there. This grief for his home, which overcomes so many married seamen, did not deprive Captain Mac W____ of his legitimate appetite. In fact, the steward would almost invariably come up to me, sitting in the captain's chair at the head of the table, to say in a grave murmur, "The captain asks for one more slice of meat and two potatoes." We, his officers, could hear him moving about in his berth, or lightly snoring, or fetching deep sighs, or splashing and blowing in his bathroom, and we made our reports to him through the

keyhole, as it were. It was the crowning achievement of his amiable character that the answers we got were given in a quite mild and friendly tone. Some commanders in their periods of seclusion are constantly grumpy, and seem to resent the mere sound of your voice as an injury and an insult.

But a grumpy recluse cannot worry his subordinates, whereas the man in whom the sense of duty is strong (or, perhaps, only the sense of self-importance), and who persists in airing on deck his moroseness all day—and perhaps half the night—becomes a grievous infliction. He walks the poop darting gloomy glances as though he wished to poison the sea, and snaps your head off savagely whenever you happen to blunder within ear-shot. And these vagaries are the harder to bear patiently, as becomes a man and an officer, because no sailor is really good-tempered during the first few days of a voyage. There are regrets, memories, the instinctive longing for the departed idleness, the instinctive hate of all work. Besides, things have a knack of going wrong at the start, especially in the matter of irritating trifles. And there is the abiding thought of a whole year of more or less hard life before one, because there was hardly a southern-going voyage in the yesterday of the sea which meant anything less than a twelve-month. Yes, it needed a few days after the taking of your departure for a ship's company to shake down into their places, and for the soothing deep-water ship routine to establish its beneficent sway.

It is a great doctor for sore hearts and sore heads, too, your ship's routine, which I have seen soothe—at least for a time—the most turbulent of spirits. There is health in it, and peace, and satisfaction of the accomplished round, for each day of the ship's life seems to close a circle within the wide ring of the sea horizon. It borrows a certain dignity of sameness from the majestic monotony of the sea. He who loves the sea loves also the ship's routine.

Nowhere else than upon the sea do the days, weeks, and months fall away quicker into the past. They seem to be left astern as easily as the light air-bubbles in the swirls of the ship's wake, and vanish into a great silence in which your

ship moves on with a sort of magical effect. They pass away, the days, the weeks, the months. Nothing but a gale can disturb the orderly life of the ship, and the spell of unshaken monotony that seems to have fallen upon the very voices of her men is broken only by the near prospect of a Landfall.

Then is the spirit of the ship's commander stirred strongly again. But it is not moved to seek seclusion and to remain, hidden and inert, shut up in a small cabin with the solace of a good bodily appetite. When about to make the land, the spirit of the ship's commander is tormented by an unconquerable restlessness. It seems unable to abide for many seconds together in the holy of holies of the captain's stateroom, it will go out on deck and gaze ahead, through straining eyes, as the appointed moment comes nearer. It is kept vigorously upon the stretch of excessive vigilance. Meantime, the body of the ship's commander is being enfeebled by want of appetite, at least, such is my experience, though "enfeebled" is perhaps not exactly the word I might say, rather, that it is spiritualized by a disregard for food, sleep, and all the ordinary comforts, such as they are, of sea life. In one or two cases I have known that detachment from the grosser needs of existence to remain regrettably incomplete in the matter of drink.

But these two cases were, properly speaking, pathological cases, and the only two in all my sea experience. In one of these two instances of a craving for stimulants, developed from sheer anxiety, I cannot assert that the man's seaman-like qualities were impaired in the least. It was a very anxious case, too, the land being made suddenly, close-to, on a wrong bearing, in thick weather, and during a fresh on-shore gale. Going below to speak to him soon after, I was unlucky enough to catch my captain in the very act of hasty cork-drawing. The sight, I may say, gave me an awful scare. I was well aware of the morbidly sensitive nature of the man. Fortunately, I managed to draw back unseen, and taking care to stamp heavily with my sea-boots at the foot of the cabin stairs, I made my second entry. But for this unexpected glimpse, no act of his during the next twenty-four hours could

have given me the slightest suspicion that all was not well with his nerve

III

Quite another case, and having nothing to do with drink, was that of poor Captain B——. He used to suffer from sick headaches, in his young days, every time he was approaching a coast. Well over fifty years of age when I knew him, short, stout, dignified, perhaps a little pompous, he was a man of a singularly well-informed mind, the least sailor-like in outward aspect, but certainly one of the best seamen whom it has been my good luck to serve under. He was a Plymouth man, I think, the son of a country doctor, and both his elder boys were studying medicine. He commanded a big London ship, fairly well known in her day. I thought no end of him, and that is why I remember with a peculiar satisfaction the last words he spoke to me on board his ship after an eighteen months' voyage. It was in the dock in Dundee, where we had brought a full cargo of jute from Calcutta. We had been paid off that morning, and I had come on board to take my sea chest away and to say good-by. In his slightly lofty but courteous way he inquired what were my plans. I replied that I intended leaving for London by the afternoon train, and thought of going up for examination to get my master's certificate. I had just enough service for that. He commended me for not wasting my time, with such an evident interest in my case that I was quite surprised, then, rising from his chair, he said

"Have you a ship in view after you have passed?"

I answered that I had nothing whatever in view

He shook hands with me and pronounced the memorable words

"If you happen to be in want of employment, remember that as long as I have a ship you have a ship, too."

In the way of compliment there is nothing to beat this from a ship's captain to his second mate at the end of a voyage, when the work is over and the subordinate is done with

And there is a pathos in that memory, for the poor fellow never went to sea again after all He was already ailing when we passed St. Helena, was laid up for a time when we were off the Western Islands, but got out of bed to make his Landfall He managed to keep up on deck as far as the Downs, where, giving his orders in an exhausted voice, he anchored for a few hours to send a wire to his wife and take aboard a North Sea pilot to help him sail the ship up the east coast He had not felt equal to the task by himself, for it is the sort of thing that keeps a deep-water man on his feet pretty well night and day

When we arrived in Dundee, Mrs B—— was already there, waiting to take him home We travelled up to London by the same train, but by the time I had managed to get through with my examination the ship had sailed on her next voyage without him, and, instead of joining her again, I went by request to see my old commander in his home This is the only one of my captains I have ever visited in that way. He was out of bed by then, "quite convalescent," as he declared, making a few tottering steps to meet me at the sitting-room door Evidently he was reluctant to take his final crossbearings of this earth for a Departure on the only voyage to an unknown destination a sailor ever undertakes And it was all very nice—the large, sunny room, his deep easy-chair in a bow window, with pillows and a footstool, the quiet, watchful care of the elderly, gentle woman who had borne him five children, and had not, perhaps, lived with him more than five full years out of the thirty or so of their married life There was also another woman there in a plain black dress, quite grey-haired, sitting very erect on her chair with some sewing, from which she snatched side-glances in his direction, and uttering not a single word during all the time of my call. Even when, in due course, I carried over to her a cup of tea, she only nodded at me silently, with the faintest ghost of a smile, on her tight-set lips I imagine she must have been a maiden sister of Mrs B—— come to help nurse her brother-in-law. His youngest boy, a late-comer, a great cricketer it seemed, twelve years old or thereabouts, chattered enthusi-

astically of the exploits of W G Grace And I remember his eldest son, too, a newly-fledged doctor, who took me out to smoke in the garden, and, shaking his head with professional gravity, but with genuine concern, muttered "Yes, but he doesn't get back his appetite I don't like that—I don't like that at all" The last sight of Captain B—— I had was as he nodded his head to me out of the bow window when I turned round to close the front gate

It was a distinct and complete impression, something that I don't know whether to call a Landfall or a Departure Certainly he gazed at times very fixedly before him with the Landfall's vigilant look, this sea-captain seated incongruously in a deep-back chair He had not then talked to me of employment, of ships, of being ready to take another command, but he had discoursed of his early days, in the abundant but thin flow of a wilful invalid's talk The women looked worried, but sat still, and I learned more of him in that interview than in the whole eighteen months we had sailed together It appeared he had "served his time" in the copper-ore trade, the famous copper-ore trade of old days between Swansea and the Chilean coast, coal out and ore in, deep-loaded both ways, as if in wanton defiance of the great Cape Horn seas—a work, this, for staunch ships, and a great school of staunchness for West-Country seamen A whole fleet of copper-bottomed barques, as strong in rib and planking, as well-found in gear, as ever was sent upon the seas, manned by hardy crews and commanded by young masters, was engaged in that now long-defunct trade "That was the school I was trained in," he said to me almost boastfully, lying back among his pillows with a rug over his legs And it was in that trade that he obtained his first command at a very early age It was then that he mentioned to me how, as a young commander, he was always ill for a few days before making land after a long voyage But this sort of sickness used to pass off with the first sight of a familiar landmark Afterwards, he added, as he grew older, all that nervousness wore off completely, and I observed his weary eyes gaze steadily ahead, as if there had been nothing between him and the straight line of sea and sky, where what-

ever a seaman is looking for is first bound to appear But I have also seen his eyes rest fondly upon the faces in the room, upon the pictures on the wall, upon all the familiar objects of that home, whose abiding and clear image must have flashed often on his memory in times of stress and anxiety at sea Was he looking out for a strange Landfall, or taking with an untroubled mind the bearings for his last Departure?

It is hard to say, for in that voyage from which no man returns Landfall and Departure are instantaneous, merging together into one moment of supreme and final attention Certainly I do not remember any sign of faltering in the set expression of his wasted face, no hint of the nervous anxiety of a young commander about to make land on an uncharted shore He had had too much experience of Departures and Landfalls! And had he not "served his time" in the famous copper-ore trade out of Bristol Channel, the work of the staunchest ships afloat, and the school of staunch seamen?

THE MIRROR OF THE SEA (1906)

William James

WILLIAM JAMES (1842-1910), the beloved American philosopher, had all the advantages of a wealthy, cultured home, including a brother who also turned out to be a genius, Henry James—but he found his way slowly to his own role in the world. His health was delicate, his unconventional education was carried on on both sides of the Atlantic, his mind was divided between the appeals of art and science. But he finally settled on science, emerged triumphantly from a dangerous emotional crisis, and received the M.D. from Harvard at twenty-seven. A few years later he began teaching anatomy and physiology at Harvard College, only to shift to psychology in 1875, and finally to philosophy as he approached forty.

In 1890 that *The Principles of Psychology* was published, a monumental work which established James' reputation and inaugurated "modern psychology." In 1897 there came from the press *The Will to Believe and Other Essays in Popular Philosophy*, and in 1899 *Talks to Teachers on Psychology, and to Students on Some of Life's Ideals*. The latter contained the essay, "On A Certain Blindness in Human Beings," which James especially recommended to his friends because it elaborated the "perception on which my whole individualistic philosophy is based": "The blindness in human beings . . . is the blindness with which we all are afflicted in regard to the feelings of creatures and people different from ourselves." In his life and his writings, technical or popular, James was always trying to dispel that blindness.

During the last decade he was working on the more abstruse problems of philosophy, he wrote such provocative books as *The Varieties of Religious Experience* and *Pragmatism*.

tism, but he never succeeded in constructing the system, in writing "the book" which he long dreamed of. In a way, James was always the tentative, exploratory, personal essayist.

He went abroad in the spring of 1910 and returned just in time, to die peacefully at his summer home in New Hampshire. "A man coquetting with too many countries is as bad as a bigamist," he once said, "and loses his soul altogether."

"The Energies of Men" was originally the Presidential Address delivered by James before the American Philosophical Association in 1906 and later published in a more popular form.

The Energies of Men

EVERYONE knows what it is to start a piece of work, either intellectual or muscular, feeling stale—or *oold*, as an Adirondack guide once put it to me. And everybody knows what it is to “warm up” to his job. The process of warming up gets particularly striking in the phenomenon known as “second wind.” On usual occasions we make a practice of stopping an occupation as soon as we meet the first effective layer (so to call it) of fatigue. We have then walked, played, or worked “enough,” so we desist. That amount of fatigue is an efficacious obstruction on this side of which our usual life is cast. But if an unusual necessity forces us to press onward, a surprising thing occurs. The fatigue gets worse up to a certain critical point, when gradually or suddenly it passes away, and we are fresher than before. We have evidently tapped a level of new energy, masked until then by the fatigue-obstacle usually obeyed. There may be layer after layer of this experience. A third and a fourth “wind” may supervene. Mental activity shows the phenomenon as well as physical, and in exceptional cases we may find, beyond the very extremity of fatigue-distress, amounts of ease and power that we never dreamed ourselves to own,—sources of strength habitually not taxed at all, because habitually we never push through the obstruction, never pass those early critical points.

For many years I have mused on the phenomenon of second wind, trying to find a physiological theory. It is evident that our organism has stored-up reserves of energy that are ordinarily not called upon, but that may be called upon deeper and deeper strata of combustible or explosive material, discontinuously arranged, but ready for use by anyone who probes so deep, and repairing themselves by rest as well as do

the superficial strata Most of us continue living unnecessarily near our surface Our energy-budget is like our nutritive budget. Physiologists say that a man is in "nutritive equilibrium" when day after day he neither gains nor loses weight. But the odd thing is that this condition may obtain on astonishingly different amounts of food Take a man in nutritive equilibrium, and systematically increase or lessen his rations. In the first case he will begin to gain weight, in the second case to lose it. The change will be the greatest on the first day, less on the second, less still on the third, and so on, till he has gained all that he will gain, or lost all that he will lose, on that altered diet He is now in nutritive equilibrium again, but with a new weight, and this neither lessens nor increases because his various combustion-processes have adjusted themselves to the changed dietary He gets rid, in one way or another, of just as much N,C,H, etc , as he takes in *per diem*

Just so one can be in what I might call "efficiency-equilibrium" (neither gaining nor losing power when once the equilibrium is reached) on astonishingly different quantities of work, no matter in what direction the work may be measured It may be physical work, intellectual work, moral work, or spiritual work

Of course there are limits the trees don't grow into the sky But the plain fact remains that men the world over possess amounts of resource which only very exceptional individuals push to their extremes of use But the very same individual, pushing his energies to their extreme, may in a vast number of cases keep the pace up day after day, and find no "reaction" of a bad sort, so long as decent hygienic conditions are preserved. His more active rate of energizing does not wreck him, for the organism adapts itself, and as the rate of waste augments, augments correspondingly the rate of repair

I say the *rate* and not the *time* of repair The busiest man needs no more hours of rest than the idler. Some years ago Professor Patrick, of the Iowa State University, kept three young men awake for four days and nights When his observations on them were finished, the subjects were permitted to sleep themselves out. All awoke from this sleep completely

refreshed, but the one who took the longest to restore himself from his long vigil only slept one-third more time than was regular with him

If my reader will put together these two conceptions, first, that few men live at their maximum of energy, and second, that anyone may be in vital equilibrium at very different rates of energizing, he will find, I think, that a very pretty practical problem of national economy, as well as of individual ethics, opens upon his view In rough terms, we may say that a man who energizes below his normal maximum fails by just so much to profit by his chance at life, and that a nation filled with such men is inferior to a nation run at higher pressure The problem is, then, how can men be trained up to their most useful pitch of energy? And how can nations make such training most accessible to all their sons and daughters This, after all, is only the general problem of education, formulated in slightly different terms

"Rough" terms, I said just now, because the words "energy" and "maximum" may easily suggest only *quantity* to the reader's mind, whereas in measuring the human energies of which I speak, qualities as well as quantities have to be taken into account Everyone feels that his total *power* rises when he passes to a higher qualitative level of life

Writing is higher than walking, thinking is higher than writing, deciding higher than thinking, deciding "no" higher than deciding "yes"—at least the man who passes from one of these activities to another will usually say that each later one involves a greater element of *inner work* than the earlier ones, even though the total heat given out or the foot-pounds expended by the organism, may be less Just how to conceive this inner work physiologically is as yet impossible, but psychologically we all know what the word means We need a particular spur or effort to start us upon inner work, it tires us to sustain it, and when long sustained, we know how easily we lapse When I speak of "energizing," and its rates and levels and sources, I mean therefore our inner as well as our outer work

Let no one think, then, that our problem of individual and

national economy is solely that of the maximum of pounds raisable against gravity, the maximum of locomotion, or of agitation of any sort, that human beings can accomplish That might signify little more than hurrying and jumping about in unco-ordinated ways, whereas inner work, though it so often reinforces outer work, quite as often means its arrest To relax, to say to ourselves (with the "new thoughters") "Peace! be still!" is sometimes a great achievement of inner work When I speak of human energizing in general, the reader must therefore understand that sum-total of activities, some outer and some inner, some muscular, some emotional, some moral, some spiritual, of whose waxing and waning in himself he is at all times so well aware How to keep it at an appreciable maximum? How not to let the level lapse? That is the great problem But the work of men and women is of innumerable kinds, each kind being, as we say, carried on by a particular faculty, so the great problem splits into two sub-problems thus

1. What are the limits of human faculty in various directions?

2 By what diversity of means, in the differing types of human beings, may the faculties be stimulated to their best results?

Read in one way, these two questions sound both trivial and familiar. there is a sense in which we have all asked them ever since we were born Yet as a methodical programme of scientific inquiry, I doubt whether they have ever been seriously taken up If answered fully, almost the whole of mental science and of the science of conduct would find a place under them I propose, in what follows, to press them on the reader's attention in an informal way

The first point to agree upon in this enterprise is that as a rule men habitually use only a small part of the powers which they actually possess and which they might use under appropriate conditions

Every one is familiar with the phenomenon of feeling more or less alive on different days Every one knows on any given day that there are energies slumbering in him which the incitements of that day do not call forth, but which he might

display if these were greater Most of us feel as if a sort of cloud weighed upon us, keeping us below our highest notch of clearness in discernment, sureness in reasoning, or firmness in deciding Compared with what we ought to be, we are only half awake Our fires are damped, our drafts are checked We are making use of only a small part of our possible mental and physical resources In some persons this sense of being cut off from their rightful resources is extreme, and we then get the formidable neurasthenic and psychasthenic conditions, with life grown into one tissue of impossibilities, that so many medical books describe

Stating the thing broadly, the human individual thus lives usually far within his limits, he possesses powers of various sorts which he habitually fails to use He energizes below his *maximum*, and he behaves below his *optimum* In elementary faculty, in co-ordination, in power of *inhibition* and control, in every conceivable way, his life is contracted like the field of vision of an hysterical subject—but with less excuse, for the poor hysteric is diseased, while in the rest of us it is only an inveterate *habit*—the habit of inferiority to our full self—that is bad

Admit so much, then, and admit also that the charge of being inferior to their full self is far truer of some men than of others, then the practical question ensues *to what do the better men owe their escape? and, in the fluctuations which all men feel in their own degree of energizing, to what are the improvements due, when they occur?*

In general terms the answer is plain

Either some unusual stimulus fills them with emotional excitement, or some unusual idea of necessity induces them to make an extra effort of will. *Excitements, ideas, and efforts*, in a word, are what carry us over the dam

In those “hyperesthetic” conditions which chronic invalidism so often brings in its train, the dam has changed its normal place The slightest functional exercise gives a distress which the patient yields to and stops In such cases of “habit-neurosis” a new range of power often comes in consequence of the “bullying treatment,” of efforts which the doctor obliges

the patient, much against his will, to make First comes the very extremity of distress, then follows unexpected relief There seems no doubt that *we are each and all of us to some extent victims of habit-neurosis* We have to admit the wider potential range and the habitually narrow actual use We live subject to arrest by degrees of fatigue which we have come only from habit to obey Most of us may learn to push the barrier farther off, and to live in perfect comfort on much higher levels of power

Country people and city people, as a class, illustrate this difference The rapid rate of life, the number of decisions in an hour, the many things to keep account of, in a busy city man's or woman's life, seem monstrous to a country brother He doesn't see how we live at all A day in New York or Chicago fills him with terror The danger and noise make it appear like a permanent earthquake But settle him there, and in a year or two he will have caught the pulse-beat He will vibrate to the city's rhythms, and if he only succeeds in his avocation, whatever that may be, he will find a joy in all the hurry and the tension, he will keep the pace as well as any of us, and get as much out of himself in any week as he ever did in ten weeks in the country

The stimuli of those who successfully respond and undergo the transformation here, are duty, the example of others, and crowd-pressure and contagion The transformation, moreover, is a chronic one the new level of energy becomes permanent The duties of new offices of trust are constantly producing this effect on human beings appointed to them The physiologists call a stimulus "dynamogenic" when it increases the muscular contractions of men to whom it is applied, but appeals can be dynamogenic morally as well as muscularly. We are witnessing here in America today the dynamogenic effect of a very exalted political office upon the energies of an individual who had already manifested a healthy amount of energy before the office came

Humbler examples show perhaps still better what chronic effects duty's appeal may produce in chosen individuals John Stuart Mill somewhere says that women excel men in the

power of keeping up sustained moral excitement. Every case of illness nursed by wife or mother is a proof of this, and where can one find greater examples of sustained endurance than in those thousands of poor homes, where the woman successfully holds the family together and keeps it going by taking all the thought and doing all the work—nursing, teaching, cooking, washing, sewing, scrubbing, saving, helping neighbors, “choring” outside—where does the catalogue end? If she does a bit of scolding now and then who can blame her? But often she does just the reverse, keeping the children clean and the man good tempered, and soothing and smoothing the whole neighborhood into finer shape.

Eighty years ago a certain Montyon left to the Académie Française a sum of money to be given in small prizes, to the best examples of “virtue” of the year. The academy's committees, with great good sense, have shown a partiality to virtues simple and chronic, rather than to her spasmodic and dramatic flights, and the exemplary housewives reported on have been wonderful and admirable enough. In Paul Bourget's report for this year we find numerous cases, of which this is a type, Jeanne Chaix, eldest of six children, mother insane, father chronically ill. Jeanne, with no money but her wages at a pasteboard-box factory, directs the household, brings up the children, and successfully maintains the family of eight, which thus subsists, morally as well as materially, by the sole force of her valiant will. In some of these French cases charity to outsiders is added to the inner family burden, or helpless relatives, young or old, are adopted, as if the strength were inexhaustible and ample for every appeal. Details are too long to quote here, but human nature, responding to the call of duty, appears nowhere sublimer than in the person of these humble heroines of family life.

Turning from more chronic to acuter proofs of human nature's reserves of power, we find that the stimuli that carry us over the usually effective dam are most often the classic emotional ones, love, anger, crowd-contagion or despair. Despair lames most people, but it wakes others fully up. Every siege or shipwreck or polar expedition brings out some hero who

keeps the whole company in heart Last year there was a terrible colliery explosion at Courrières in France Two hundred corpses, if I remember rightly, were exhumed After twenty days of excavation, the rescuers heard a voice "Me touci," said the first man unearthed He proved to be a collier named Nemy, who had taken command of thirteen others in the darkness, disciplined them and cheered them, and brought them out alive Hardly any of them could see or speak or walk when brought into the day Five days later, a different type of vital endurance was unexpectedly unburied in the person of one Berton who, isolated from any but dead companions, had been able to sleep away most of his time

A new position of responsibility will usually show a man to be a far stronger creature than was supposed Cromwell's and Grant's careers are the stock examples of how war will wake a man up I owe to Professor C E Norton, my colleague, the permission to print part of a private letter from Colonel Baird-Smith written shortly after the six weeks' siege of Delhi, in 1857, for the victorious issue of which that excellent officer was chiefly to be thanked He writes as follows

" . . My poor wife had some reason to think that war and disease between them had left very little of a husband to take under nursing when she got him again An attack of camp-scurvy had filled my mouth with sores, shaken every joint in my body, and covered me all over with sores and livid spots, so that I was marvellously unlovely to look upon A smart knock on the ankle-joint from the splinter of a shell that burst in my face, in itself a mere *bagatelle* of a wound, had been of necessity neglected under the pressing and incessant calls upon me, and had grown worse and worse until the whole foot below the ankle became a black mass and seemed to threaten mortification I insisted, however, on being allowed to use it till the place was taken, mortification or no, and though the pain was sometimes horrible, I carried my point and kept up to the last On the day after the assault I had an unlucky fall on some bad ground, and it was an open question for a day or two whether I hadn't broken my arm at the elbow Fortunately it turned out to be only a severe

tion, such as saying "no" to some habitual temptation, or performing some courageous act, will launch a man on a higher level of energy for days and weeks, will give him a new range of power "In the act of uncorking a whiskey bottle which I had brought home to get drunk upon," said a man to me, "I suddenly found myself running out into the garden, where I smashed it on the ground. I felt so happy and uplifted after this act, that for two months I wasn't tempted to touch a drop."

The emotions and excitements due to usual situations are the usual inciters of the will. But these act discontinuously, and in the intervals the shallower levels of life tend to close in and shut us off. Accordingly the best practical knowers of the human soul have invented the thing known as methodical ascetic discipline to keep the deeper levels constantly in reach. Beginning with easy tasks, passing to harder ones, and exercising day by day, it is, I believe, admitted that disciples of asceticism can reach very high levels of freedom and power of will.

Ignatius Loyola's spiritual exercises must have produced this result in innumerable devotees. But the most venerable ascetic system, and the one whose results have the most voluminous experimental corroboration is undoubtedly the Yoga system in Hindustan. From time immemorial, by Hatha Yoga, Raja Yoga, Karma Yoga, or whatever code of practice it might be, Hindu aspirants to perfection have trained themselves, month in and out, for years. The result claimed, and certainly in many cases accorded by impartial judges, is strength of character, personal power, unshakability of soul. In an article in the *Philosophical Review*, from which I am largely copying here, I have quoted at great length the experience with "Hatha Yoga" of a very gifted European friend of mine who, by persistently carrying out for several months its methods of fasting from food and sleep, its exercises in breathing and thought-concentration, and its fantastic posture-gymnastics, seems to have succeeded in waking up deeper and deeper levels of will and moral and intellectual power in himself, and to have escaped from a decidedly menacing brain-

condition of the "circular" type, from which he had suffered for years.

Judging by my friend's letters, of which the last I have is written fourteen months after the Yoga training began, there can be no doubt of his relative regeneration. He has undergone material trials with indifference, travelled third-class on Mediterranean steamers, and fourth-class on African trains, living with the poorest Arabs and sharing their unaccustomed food, all with equanimity. His devotion to certain interests has been put to heavy strain, and nothing is more remarkable to me than the changed moral tone with which he reports the situation. A profound modification has unquestionably occurred in the running of his mental machinery. The gearing has changed, and his will is available otherwise than it was.

My friend is a man of very peculiar temperament. Few of us would have had the will to start upon the Yoga training, which, once started, seemed to conjure the further will-power needed out of itself. And not all of those who could launch themselves would have reached the same results. The Hindus themselves admit that in some men the results may come without call or bell. My friend writes to me "You are quite right in thinking that religious crises, love-crises, indignation-crises may awaken in a very short time powers similar to those reached by years of patient Yoga-practice."

Probably most medical men would treat this individual's case as one of what it is fashionable now to call by the name of "self-suggestion," or "expectant attention"—as if those phrases were explanatory, or meant more than the fact that certain men can be influenced, while others cannot be influenced, by certain sorts of ideas. This leads me to say a word about ideas considered as dynamogenic agents, or stimuli for unlocking what would otherwise be unused reservoirs of individual power.

One thing that ideas do is to contradict other ideas and keep us from believing them. An idea that thus negates a first idea may itself in turn be negated by a third idea, and the first idea may thus regain its natural influence over our belief.

and determine our behavior Our philosophic and religious development proceeds thus by credulities, negations, and the negating of negations

But whether for arousing or for stopping belief, ideas may fail to be efficacious, just as a wire at one time alive with electricity, may at another time be dead Here our insight into causes fails us, and we can only note results in general terms In general, whether a given idea shall be a live idea depends more on the person into whose mind it is injected than on the idea itself Which is the suggestive idea for this person, and which for that one? Mr Fletcher's disciples regenerate themselves by the idea (and the fact) that they are chewing, and re-chewing, and super-chewing their food Dr Dewey's pupils regenerate themselves by going without their breakfast—a fact, but also an ascetic idea Not every one can use these ideas with the same success

But apart from such individually varying susceptibilities, there are common lines along which men simply as men tend to be inflammable by ideas As certain objects naturally awaken love, anger, or cupidity, so certain ideas naturally awaken the energies of loyalty, courage, endurance, or devotion When these ideas are effective in an individual's life, their effect is often very great indeed They may transfigure it, unlocking innumerable powers which, but for the idea, would never have come into play "Fatherland," "the Flag," "the Union," "Holy Church," "the Monroe Doctrine," "Truth," "Science," "Liberty," Garibaldi's phrase, "Rome or Death," etc , are so many examples of energy-releasing ideas The social nature of such phrases is an essential factor of their dynamic power They are forces of detent in situations in which no other force produces equivalent effects, and each is a force of detent only in a specific group of men.

The memory that an oath or vow has been made will nerve one to abstinences and efforts otherwise impossible, witness the "pledge" in the history of the temperance movement A mere promise to his sweetheart will clean up a youth's life all over—at any rate for a time For such effects an educated susceptibility is required The idea of one's "honor," for ex-

ample, unlocks energy only in those of us who have had the education of a "gentleman," so called

That delightful being, Prince Pueckler-Muskau, writes to his wife from England that he has invented "a sort of artificial resolution respecting things that are difficult of performance My device," he continues, "is this *I give my word of honor most solemnly to myself* to do or to leave undone this or that I am of course extremely cautious in the use of this expedient, but when once the word is given, even though I afterwards think I have been precipitate or mistaken, I hold it to be perfectly irrevocable, whatever inconveniences I foresee likely to result If I were capable of breaking my word after such mature consideration, I should lose all respect for myself,—and what man of sense would not prefer death to such an alternative? When the mysterious formula is pronounced, no alteration in my own view, nothing short of physical impossibilities, must, for the welfare of my soul, alter my will I find something very satisfactory in the thought that man has the power of framing such props and weapons out of the most trivial materials, indeed out of nothing, merely by the force of his will, which thereby truly deserves the name of omnipotent"

Conversions, whether they be political, scientific, philosophic, or religious, form another way in which bound energies are let loose They unify us, and put a stop to ancient mental interferences The result is freedom, and often a great enlargement of power A belief that thus settles upon an individual always acts as a challenge to his will But, for the particular challenge to operate, he must be the right challenger In religious conversions we have so fine an adjustment that the idea may be in the mind of the challenger for years before it exerts its effects, and why it should do so then is often so far from obvious that the event is taken for a miracle of grace, and not a natural occurrence Whatever it is, it may be a highwater mark of energy, in which "noes," once impossible, are easy, and in which a new range of "yeses" gains the right of way

We are just now witnessing a very copious unlocking of

energies by ideas in the persons of those converts to "New Thought," "Christian Science," "Metaphysical Healing," or other forms of spiritual philosophy, who are so numerous among us today The ideas here are healthy-minded and optimistic, and is it quite obvious that a wave of religious activity, analogous in some respects to the spread of early Christianity, Buddhism, and Mohammedanism, is passing over our American world The common feature of these optimistic faiths is that they all tend to the suppression of what Mr Horace Fletcher calls "fearthought" Fearthought he defines as the "self-suggestion of inferiority", so that one may say that these systems all operate by the suggestion of power And the power, small or great, comes in various shapes to the individual,—power, as he will tell you, not to "mind" things that used to vex him, power to concentrate his mind, good cheer, good temper—in short, to put it mildly, a firmer, more elastic moral tone

The most genuinely saintly person I have ever known is a friend of mine now suffering from cancer of the breast—I hope that she may pardon my citing her here as an example of what ideas can do Her ideas have kept her a practically well woman for months after she should have given up and gone to bed They have annulled all pain and weakness and given her a cheerful active life, unusually beneficent to others to whom she has afforded help Her doctors, acquiescing in results they could not understand, have had the good sense to let her go her own way

How far the mind-cure movement is destined to extend its influence, or what intellectual modifications it may yet undergo, no one can foretell It is essentially a religious movement, and to academically nurtured minds its utterances are tasteless and often grotesque enough. It also incurs the natural enmity of medical politicians, and of the whole trades-union wing of that profession But no unprejudiced observer can fail to recognize its importance as a social phenomenon today, and the higher medical minds are already trying to interpret it fairly, and make its power available for their own therapeutic ends

Dr Thomas Hyslop, of the great West Riding Asylum in

England, said last year to the British Medical Association that the best sleep-producing agent which his practice had revealed to him, was *prayer*. I say this, he added (I am sorry here that I must quote from memory), purely as a medical man. The exercise of prayer, in those who habitually exert it, must be regarded by us doctors as the most adequate and normal of all the pacifiers of the mind and calmers of the nerves.

But in few of us are functions not tied up by the exercise of other functions. Relatively few medical men and scientific men, I fancy, can pray. Few can carry on any living commerce with "God." Yet many of us are well aware of how much freer and abler our lives would be, were such important forms of energizing not sealed up by the critical atmosphere in which we have been reared. There are in every one potential forms of activity that actually are shunted out from use. Part of the imperfect vitality under which we labor can thus be easily explained. One part of our mind dams up—even *damns* up!—the other parts.

Conscience makes cowards of us all. Social conventions prevent us from telling the truth after the fashion of the heroes and heroines of Bernard Shaw. We all know persons who are models of excellence, but who belong to the extreme philistine type of mind. So deadly is their intellectual respectability that we can't converse about certain subjects at all, can't let our minds play over them, can't even mention them in their presence. I have numbered among my dearest friends persons thus inhibited intellectually, with whom I would gladly have been able to talk freely about certain interests of mine, certain authors, say, as Bernard Shaw, Chesterton, Edward Carpenter, H. G. Wells, but it wouldn't do, it made them too uncomfortable, they wouldn't play, I had to be silent. An intellect thus tied down by literality and decorum makes on one the same sort of an impression that an able-bodied man would who should habituate himself to do his work with only one of his fingers, locking up the rest of his organism and leaving it unused.

I trust that by this time I have said enough to convince the

reader both of the truth and of the importance of my thesis. The two questions, first, that of the possible extent of our powers, and, second, that of the various avenues of approach to them, the various keys for unlocking them in diverse individuals, dominate the whole problem of individual and national education. We need a topography of the limits of human power, similar to the chart which oculists use of the field of human vision. We need also a study of the various types of human being with reference to the different ways in which their energy-reserves may be appealed to and set loose. Biographies and individual experiences of every kind may be drawn upon for evidence here.

ESSAYS ON FAITH AND MORALS (1943)

G. K. Chesterton

GILBERT Keith Chesterton (1874-1936) the Doctor Johnson of the 20th century, was a fabulous figure in energy and enthusiasm, in paradox and productivity. Some ninety books are attributed to him, not to mention scores of prefaces for other people's books.

A native of London, he studied art there, tried his hand at poetry, entered journalism in 1900, and thereupon proceeded to turn out articles, essays, poems, plays, biographies, detective stories and novels with incredible gusto. All this should have made him a recluse but he was a militant magazine editor, a popular debater and lecturer, a wide-ranging traveller and the friend of such diverse persons as Hilaire Belloc (his closest friend), G. B. Shaw and H. G. Wells. Another friend was Father John O'Connor of Bradford, some of whose "inner intellectual qualities" were put into the detective-priest of the fifty Father Brown stories.

Despite his versatility Chesterton would insist that he was primarily a religious man and that his religious history was central. He passed from Unitarianism through Anglicanism to Catholicism. He did not actually enter the Roman Catholic Church until 1922 but his final position was implicit in *Heretics* (1905) and still more in *Orthodoxy* (1908), perhaps his most brilliant and personal work. "People have fallen into the foolish habit of speaking of orthodoxy as something heavy, humdrum, and safe. There was never anything so perilous or so exciting as orthodoxy. It was sanity, and to be sane is more dramatic than to be mad."

and wait for a train Did you ever hear a small boy complain of having to hang about a railway station and wait for a train? No, for to him to be inside a railway station is to be inside a cavern of wonder and a palace of poetical pleasures Because to him the red light and the green light on the signal are like a new sun and new moon Because to him when the wooden arm of the signal falls down suddenly, it is as if a great king had thrown down his staff as a signal and started a shrieking tournament of trains I myself am of little boys' habit in this matter They also serve who only stand and wait for the two-fifteen Their meditations may be full of rich and fruitful things Many of the most purple hours of my life have been passed at Clapham Junction, which is now, I suppose, under water I have been there in many moods so fixed and mystical that the water might well have come up to my waist before I noticed it particularly But, in the case of all such annoyances, as I have said, everything depends upon the emotional point of view You can safely apply the test to almost every one of the things that are currently talked of as the typical nuisances of daily life

For instance, there is a current impression that it is unpleasant to have to run after one's hat Why should it be unpleasant to the well-ordered and pious mind? Not merely because it is running, and running exhausts one The same people run much faster in games and sports The same people run much more eagerly after an uninteresting little leather ball than they will after a nice silk hat There is an idea that it is humiliating to run after one's hat, and when people say it is humiliating they mean that it is comic It certainly is comic, but man is a very comic creature, and most of the things he does are comic—eating, for instance And the most comic things of all are exactly the things that are most worth doing—such as making love A man running after a hat is not half so ridiculous as a man running after a wife

Now a man could, if he felt rightly in the matter, run after his hat with the manliest ardor and the most sacred joy He might regard himself as a jolly huntsman pursuing a wild animal, for certainly no animal could be wilder In fact, I am in-

clined to believe that hat-hunting on windy days will be the sport of the upper classes in the future. There will be a meet of ladies and gentlemen on some high ground on a gusty morning. They will be told that the professional attendants have started a hat in such-and-such a thicket, or whatever be the technical term. Notice that this employment will in the fullest degree combine sport with humanitarianism. The hunters would feel that they were not inflicting pain. Nay, they would feel that they were inflicting pleasure, rich, almost riotous pleasure, upon the people who were looking on. When last I saw an old gentleman running after his hat in Hyde Park, I told him that a heart so benevolent as his ought to be filled with peace and thanks at the thought of how much unaffected pleasure his every gesture and bodily attitude were at that moment giving to the crowd.

The same principle can be applied to every other typical domestic worry. A gentleman trying to get a fly out of the milk or a piece of cork out of his glass of wine often imagines himself to be irritated. Let him think for a moment of the patience of anglers sitting by dark pools, and let his soul be immediately irradiated with gratification and repose. Again, I have known some people of very modern views driven by their distress to the use of theological terms to which they attached no doctrinal significance, merely because a drawer was jammed tight and they could not pull it out. A friend of mine was particularly afflicted in this way. Every day his drawer was jammed, and every day in consequence it was something else that rhymes to it. But I pointed out to him that this sense of wrong was really subjective and relative, it rested entirely upon the assumption that the drawer could, should, and would come out easily. "But if," I said, "you picture to yourself that you are pulling against some powerful and oppressive enemy, the struggle will become merely exciting and not exasperating. Imagine that you are roping up a fellow creature out of an Alpine crevasse. Imagine even that you are a boy again and engaged in a tug-of-war between French and English." Shortly after saying this I left him, but I have no doubt at all that my words bore the best possible fruit. I have no doubt

that every day of his life he hangs on to the handle of that drawer with a flushed face and eyes bright with battle, uttering encouraging shouts to himself, and seeming to hear all round him that roar of an applauding ring

So I do not think it altogether fanciful or incredible to suppose that even the floods in London may be accepted and enjoyed poetically Nothing beyond inconvenience seems really to have been caused by them, and inconvenience, as I have said, in only one aspect, and that the most unimaginative and accidental aspect of a really romantic situation An adventure is only an inconvenience rightly considered An inconvenience is only an adventure wrongly considered The water that girdled the houses and shops of London must, if anything, have only increased their previous witchery and wonder. For as the Roman Catholic priest in the story said "Wine is good with everything except water," and on a similar principle, water is good with everything except wine

ALL THINGS CONSIDERED (1908)

A Defence of Nonsense

THERE are two equal and eternal ways of looking at this twilight world of ours we may see it as the twilight of evening or the twilight of morning, we may think of anything, down to a fallen acorn, as a descendant or as an ancestor. There are times when we are almost crushed, not so much with the load of the evil as with the load of the goodness of humanity, when we feel that we are nothing but the inheritors of a humiliating splendour But there are other times when everything seems primitive, when the ancient stars are only sparks blown from a boy's bonfire, when the whole earth seems so young and experimental that even the white hair of the aged, in the fine biblical phrase, is like almond trees that blossom, like the white hawthorn grown in May That it is

good for a man to realise that he is "the heir of all the ages" is pretty commonly admitted, it is a less popular but equally important point that it is good for him sometimes to realise that he is not only an ancestor, but an ancestor of primal antiquity, it is good for him to wonder whether he is not a hero, and to experience ennobling doubts as to whether he is not a solar myth

The matters which most thoroughly evoke this sense of the abiding childhood of the world are those which are really fresh, abrupt, and inventive in any age, and if we were asked what was the best proof of this adventurous youth in the nineteenth century we should say, with all respect to its portentous sciences and philosophies, that it was to be found in the rhymes of Mr Edward Lear and in the literature of nonsense *The Dong with the Luminous Nose*, at least, is original, as the first ship and the first plough were original

It is true in a certain sense that some of the greatest writers the world has seen—Aristophanes, Rabelais, and Sterne—have written nonsense, but unless we are mistaken, it is in a widely different sense. The nonsense of these men was satiric—that is to say, symbolic, it was a kind of exuberant capering round a discovered truth. There is all the difference in the world between the instinct of satire, which, seeing in the Kaiser's moustaches something typical of him, draws them continually larger and larger, and the instinct of nonsense which, for no reason whatever, imagines what those moustaches would look like on the present Archbishop of Canterbury if he grew them in a fit of absence of mind. We incline to think that no age except our own could have understood that the Quangle-Wangle meant absolutely nothing, and the Lands of the Jumblies were absolutely nowhere. We fancy that if the account of the knave's trial in *Alice in Wonderland* had been published in the seventeenth century it would have been bracketed with Bunyan's *Trial of Faithful* as a parody on the state prosecutions of the time. We fancy that if *The Dong with the Luminous Nose* had appeared in the same period every one would have called it a dull satire on Oliver Cromwell.

It is altogether advisedly that we quote chiefly from Mr. Lear's *Nonsense Rhymes*. To our mind he is both chronologically and essentially the father of nonsense, we think him superior to Lewis Carroll. In one sense, indeed, Lewis Carroll has a great advantage. We know what Lewis Carroll was in daily life—he was a singularly serious and conventional don, universally respected, but very much of a pedant and something of a Philistine. Thus his strange double life in earth and in dreamland emphasises the idea that lies at the back of nonsense—the idea of *escape*, of escape into a world where things are not fixed horribly in an eternal appropriateness, where apples grow on pear trees, and any odd man you meet may have three legs. Lewis Carroll, living one life in which he would have thundered morally against any one who walked on the wrong plot of grass, and another life in which he would cheerfully call the sun green and the moon blue, was, by his very divided nature, his one foot on both worlds, a perfect type of the position of modern nonsense. His Wonderland is a country populated by insane mathematicians. We feel the whole is an escape into a world of masquerade, we feel that if we could pierce their disguises, we might discover that Humpty Dumpty and the March Hare were Professors and Doctors of Divinity enjoying a mental holiday. This sense of escape is certainly less emphatic in Edward Lear, because of the completeness of his citizenship in the world of unreason. We do not know his prosaic biography as we know Lewis Carroll's. We accept him as a purely fabulous figure, on his own description of himself.

His body is perfectly spherical,
He weareth a runcible hat.

While Lewis Carroll's Wonderland is purely intellectual, Lear introduces quite another element—the element of the poetical and even emotional. Carroll works by the pure reason, but this is not so strong a contrast, for, after all, mankind in the main has always regarded reason as a bit of a joke. Lear introduces his unmeaning words and his amorphous creatures

not with the pomp of reason, but with the romantic prelude of rich hues and haunting rhythms,

Far and few, far and few,
Are the lands where the Jumblies live,

is an entirely different type of poetry to that exhibited in *Jabberwocky*. Carroll, with a sense of mathematical neatness, makes his whole poem a mosaic of new and mysterious words. But Edward Lear, with more subtle and placid effrontery, is always introducing scraps of his own elvish dialect into the middle of simple and rational statements, until we are almost stunned into admitting that we know what they mean. There is a genial ring of common sense about such lines as,

For his aunt Jobiska said "Every one knows
That a Pobble is better without his toes,"

which is beyond the reach of Carroll. The poet seems so easy on the matter that we are almost driven to pretend that we see his meaning, that we know the peculiar difficulties of a Pobble, that we are as old travellers in the "Gromboohian Plain" as he is.

Our claim that nonsense is a new literature (we might almost say a new sense) would be quite indefensible if nonsense were nothing more than a mere aesthetic fancy. Nothing sublimely artistic has ever arisen out of mere art, any more than anything essentially reasonable has ever arisen out of the pure reason. There must always be a rich moral soil for any great aesthetic growth. The principle of *art for art's sake* is a very good principle if it means that there is a vital distinction between the earth and the tree that has its roots in the earth, but it is a very bad principle if it means that the tree could grow just as well with its roots in the air. Every great literature has always been allegorical—allegorical of some view of the whole universe. The *Iliad* is only great because all life is a battle, the *Odyssey* because all life is a journey, the Book of Job because all life is a riddle. There is one attitude in which

we think that all existence is summed up in the word "ghosts", another, and somewhat better one, in which we think it is summed up in the words *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Even the vulgarest melodrama or detective story can be good if it expresses something of the delight in sinister possibilities—the healthy lust for darkness and terror which may come on us any night in walking down a dark lane. If, therefore, nonsense is really to be the literature of the future, it must have its own version of the Cosmos to offer, the world must not only be tragic, romantic, and religious, it must be nonsensical also. And here we fancy that nonsense will, in a very unexpected way, come to the aid of the spiritual view of things. Religion has for centuries been trying to make men exult in the "wonders" of creation, but it has forgotten that a thing cannot be completely wonderful so long as it remains sensible. So long as we regard a tree as an obvious thing, naturally and reasonably created for a giraffe to eat, we cannot properly wonder at it. It is when we consider it as a prodigious wave of the living soil sprawling up to the skies for no reason in particular that we take off our hats, to the astonishment of the park-keeper. Everything has in fact another side to it, like the moon, the patroness of nonsense. Viewed from that other side, a bird is a blossom broken loose from its chain of stalk, a man a quadruped begging on its hind legs, a house a gigantesque hat to cover a man from the sun, a chair an apparatus of four wooden legs for a cripple with only two.

This is the side of things which tends most truly to spiritual wonder. It is significant that in the greatest religious poem existent, the Book of Job, the argument which convinces the infidel is not (as has been represented by the merely rational religionism of the eighteenth century) a picture of the ordered beneficence of the Creation, but, on the contrary, a picture of the huge and undecipherable unreason of it. "Hast Thou sent the rain upon the desert where no man is?" This simple sense of wonder at the shapes of things, and at their exuberant independence of our intellectual standards and our trivial definitions, is the basis of spirituality as it is the basis of nonsense. Nonsense and faith (strange as the conjunction may

seem) are the two supreme symbolic assertions of the truth that to draw out the soul of things with a syllogism is as impossible as to draw out Leviathan with a hook. The well-meaning person who, by merely studying the logical side of things, has decided that "faith is nonsense," does not know how truly he speaks, later it may come back to him in the form that nonsense is faith.

—THE DEFENDANT (1901)

John Erskine

JOHN ERSKINE (1879-1951) was forty-six when he delighted the reading public with *The Private Life of Helen of Troy* (1925), the first of several brilliant modernizations of familiar legends. He became president of the Juilliard School of Music in 1928 and more and more in his later years his name was associated with music, one of his three great loves—the other two being literature and teaching, if one may so divide the mind of a Renaissance figure.

It is well to remember that this remarkable man was first of all a great teacher of literature, at Amherst College, 1903-1909, and at Columbia University, 1909-37. He inspired thousands to love reading and at least hundreds to try writing. He planned the Great Books course for Columbia College upper classmen, even before the first World War, and established it with his characteristic energy after the war. And out of that course the whole Great Books movement has developed at St. John's College, at the University of Chicago, in the adult education movement.

In those twenty-five years before *The Private Life of Helen of Troy*, Dr. Erskine wrote many essays and poems and edited a number of books, including the lectures of Lafcadio Hearn. "The Moral Obligation to Be Intelligent" was an address which he originally delivered before the Phi Beta Kappa chapter of his beloved Amherst in 1912—and I think that he would be pleased with this choice.

The Moral Obligation to Be Intelligent

I

If a wise man should ask, What are the modern virtues? I and should answer his own question by a summary of the things we admire, if he should discard as irrelevant the ideals which by tradition we profess, but which are not found outside of the tradition or the profession—ideals like meekness, humility, the renunciation of this world, if he should include only those excellences to which our hearts are daily given, and by which our conduct is motived,—in such an inventory what virtues would he name?

This question is neither original nor very new. Our times await the reckoning up of our spiritual goods which is here suggested. We have at least this wisdom, that many of us are curious to know just what our virtues are. I wish I could offer myself as the wise man who brings the answer. But I raise this question merely to ask another—When the wise man brings his list of our genuine admirations, will intelligence be one of them? We might seem to be well within the old ideal of modesty if we claimed the virtue of intelligence. But before we claim the virtue, are we convinced that it is a virtue, not a peril?

II

The disposition to consider intelligence a peril is an old Anglo-Saxon inheritance. Our ancestors have celebrated this disposition in verse and prose. Splendid as our literature is, it has not voiced all the aspirations of humanity, nor could it be

expected to voice an aspiration that has not characteristically belonged to the English race, the praise of intelligence is not one of its characteristic glories

"Be good, sweet maid, and let who will be clever" Here is the startling alternative which to the English, alone among great nations, has not been startling but a matter of course. Here is the casual assumption that a choice must be made between goodness and intelligence, that stupidity is first cousin to moral conduct, and cleverness the first step into mischief, that reason and God are not on good terms with each other, that the mind and the heart are minor buckets in the well of truth, inexorably balanced—full mind, starved heart—stout heart, weak head.

Kingsley's line is a convenient text, but to establish the point that English literature voices a traditional distrust of the mind we must go to the masters. In Shakespeare's plays there are some highly intelligent men, but they are either villains or tragic victims. To be as intelligent as Richard or Iago or Edmund seems to involve some break with goodness, to be as wise as Prospero seems to imply some Faust-like traffic with the forbidden world, to be as thoughtful as Hamlet seems to be too thoughtful to live. In Shakespeare the prizes of life go to such men as Bassanio, or Duke Orsino, or Florizel—men of good conduct and sound character, but of no particular intelligence. There might, indeed, appear to be one general exception to this sweeping statement. Shakespeare does concede intelligence as a fortunate possession to some of his heroines. But upon even a slight examination those ladies, like Portia, turn out to have been among Shakespeare's importations—their wit was part and parcel of the story he borrowed, or, like Viola, they are English types of humility, patience, and loyalty, such as we find in the old ballads, with a bit of Euphuism added, a foreign cleverness of speech. After all, these are only a few of Shakespeare's heroines. Over against them are Ophelia, Juliet, Desdemona, Hero, Cordelia, Miranda, Perdita—lovable for other qualities than intellect,—and in a sinister group, Lady Macbeth, Cleopatra, Goneril, intelligent and wicked.

In *Paradise Lost* Milton attributes intelligence of the highest order to the devil. That this is an Anglo-Saxon reading of the infernal character may be shown by a reference to the book of Job, where Satan is simply a troublesome body, and the great wisdom of the story is from the voice of God in the whirlwind. But Milton makes his Satan so thoughtful, so persistent and liberty-loving, so magnanimous, and God so illogical, so heartless and repressive, that many perfectly moral readers fear lest Milton, like the modern novelists, may have known good and evil, but could not tell them apart. It is disconcerting to intelligence that it should be God's angel who cautions Adam not to wander in the earth, nor inquire concerning heaven's causes and ends, and that it should be Satan meanwhile who questions and explores. By Milton's reckoning of intelligence the theologian and scientist to-day alike take after Satan.

If there were time, we might trace this valuation of intelligence through the English novel. We should see how often the writers distinguished between intelligence and goodness, and have enlisted our affections for a kind of inexpert virtue. In Fielding or Scott, Thackeray or Dickens, the hero of the English novel is a well-meaning blunderer who in the last chapter is temporarily rescued by the grace of God from the mess he has made of his life. Unless he also dies in the last chapter, he will probably need rescue again. The dear woman whom the hero marries is, with a few notable exceptions, rather less intelligent than himself. When David Copperfield marries Agnes, his prospects of happiness, to the eyes of intelligence, look not very exhilarating. Agnes has more sense than Dora, but it is not even for that slight distinction that we must admire her; her great qualities are of the heart—patience, humility, faithfulness. These are the qualities also of Thackeray's good heroines, like Laura or Lady Castlewood. Beatrix Esmond and Becky Sharp, both highly intelligent, are of course a bad lot.

No less significant is the kind of emotion the English novelist invites towards his secondary or lower-class heroes—toward Mr. Boffin in *Our Mutual Friend*, for example, or Harry

Foker in *Pendennis* These characters amuse us, and we feel pleasantly superior to them, but we agree with the novelist that they are wholly admirable in their station. Yet if a Frenchman—let us say—Balzac—were presenting such types, he would make us feel, as in *Père Goriot* or *Eugénie Grandet*, not only admiration for the stable, loyal nature, but also deep pity that such goodness should be so tragically bound in unintelligence or vulgarity. This comparison of racial temperaments helps us to understand ourselves. We may continue the method at our leisure. What would Socrates have thought of Mr Pickwick, or the Vicar of Wakefield, or David Copperfield, or Arthur Pendennis? For that matter, would he have felt admiration or pity for Colonel Newcome?

III

I hardly need confess that this is not an adequate account of English literature. Let me hasten to say that I know the reader is resenting this somewhat cavalier handling of the noble writers he loves. He probably is wondering how I can expect to increase his love of literature by such unsympathetic remarks. But just now I am not concerned about our love of literature, I take it for granted and use it as an instrument to prod us with. If we love Shakespeare and Milton and Scott and Dickens and Thackeray, and yet do not know what qualities their books hold out for our admiration, then—let me say it as delicately as possible—our admiration is not discriminating, and if we neither have discrimination nor are disturbed by our lack of it, then perhaps the wise man could not list intelligence among our virtues. Certainly it would be but a silly account of English literature to say only that it set little store by the things of the mind. I am aware that for the sake of my argument I have exaggerated, by insisting upon only one aspect of English literature. But our history betrays a peculiar warfare between character and intellect such as to the Greeks, for example, would have been incomprehensible. The great Englishman, like the most famous Greeks, had intelligence as well as character, and was at ease with them.

both. But whereas the notable Greek seems typical of his race, the notable Englishman usually seems an exception to his own people, and is often best appreciated in other lands. What is more singular—in spite of the happy combination in himself of character and intelligence, he often fails to recognize the value of that combination in his neighbors. When Shakespeare portrayed such amateurish statesmen as the Duke in *Measure for Measure*, Burleigh was guiding Elizabeth's empire, and Francis Bacon was soon to be King James's counsellor. It was the young Milton who pictured the life of reason in *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*, the most spiritual fruit of philosophy in *Comus*, and when he wrote his epic he was probably England's most notable example of that intellectual inquiry and independence which in his great poem he discouraged. There remain several well-known figures in our literary history who have both possessed and believed in intelligence—Byron and Shelley in what seems our own day, Edmund Spenser before Shakespeare's time. England has more or less neglected all three, but they must in fairness be counted to her credit. Some excuse might be offered for the neglect of Byron and Shelley by a nation that likes the proprieties, but the gentle Spenser, the noblest philosopher and most chivalrous gentleman in our literature, seems to be unread only because he demands a mind as well as a heart used to high things.

This will be sufficient qualification of any disparagement of English literature, no people and no literature can be great that are not intelligent, and England has produced not only statesmen and scientists of the first order, but also poets in whom the soul was fitly mated with a lofty intellect. But I am asking you to reconsider your reading in history and fiction, to reflect whether our race has usually thought highly of the intelligence by which it has been great, I suggest these non-intellectual aspects of our literature as commentary upon my question—and all this with the hope of pressing upon you the question as to what *you* think of intelligence.

Those of us who frankly prefer character to intelligence are therefore not without precedent. If we look beneath the his-

tory of the English people, beneath the ideas expressed in our literature, we find in the temper of our remotest ancestors a certain bias which still prescribes our ethics and still prejudices us against the mind. The beginnings of our conscience can be geographically located. It began in the German forests, and it gave its allegiance not to the intellect but the will. Whether or not the severity of life in a hard climate raised the value of that persistence by which alone life could be preserved, the Germans as Tacitus knew them, and the Saxons as they landed in England, held as their chief virtue that will-power which makes character. For craft or strategy they had no use, they were already a bulldog race, they liked fighting, and they liked best to settle the matter hand to hand. The admiration for brute force which naturally accompanied this ideal of self-reliance, drew with it as naturally a certain moral sanction. A man was as good as his word, and he was ready to back up his word with a blow. No German, Tacitus says, would enter into a treaty of public or private business without his sword in his hand. When this emphasis upon the will became a social emphasis, it gave the direction to ethical feeling. Honor lay in a man's integrity, in his willingness and ability to keep his word, therefore the man became more important than his word or deed. Words and deeds were then easily interpreted, not in terms of absolute good and evil, but in terms of the man behind them. The deeds of a bad man were bad, the deeds of a good man were good. Fielding wrote *Tom Jones* to show that a good man sometimes does a bad action, consciously or unconsciously, and a bad man sometimes does good, intentionally or unintentionally. From the fact that *Tom Jones* is still popularly supposed to be as wicked as it is coarse, we may judge that Fielding did not convert all his readers. Some progress certainly has been made, we do not insist that the more saintly of two surgeons shall operate on us for appendicitis. But as a race we seem as far as possible from realising that an action can intelligently be called good only if it contributes to a good end, that it is the moral obligation of an intelligent creature to find out as far as possible whether a given action leads to a good or a bad end; and that

any system of ethics that excuses him from that obligation is vicious. If I give you poison, meaning to give you wholesome food, I have—to say the least—not done a good act, and unless I intend to throw overboard all pretence to intelligence, I must feel some responsibility for that trifling neglect to find out whether what I gave you was food or poison.

Obvious as the matter is in this academic illustration, it ought to have been still more obvious in Matthew Arnold's famous plea for culture. The purpose of culture, he said, is "to make reason and the will of God prevail." This formula he quoted from an Englishman. Differently stated, the purpose of culture, he said, is "to make an intelligent being yet more intelligent." This formula he borrowed from a Frenchman. The basis culture must have in character, the English resolution to make reason and the will of God prevail, Arnold took for granted, no man ever set a higher price on character—so far as character by itself will go. But he spent his life trying to sow a little suspicion that before we can make the will of God prevail we must find out what is the will of God.

I doubt if Arnold taught us much. He merely embarrassed us temporarily. Our race has often been so embarrassed when it has turned a sudden corner and come upon intelligence. Charles Kingsley himself, who would rather be good than clever,—and had his wish,—was temporarily embarrassed when in the consciousness of his own upright character he publicly called Newman a liar. Newman happened to be intelligent as well as good, and Kingsley's discomfiture is well known. But we discovered long ago how to evade the sudden embarrassments of intelligence. "Toll for the brave," sings the poet for those who went down in the *Royal George*. They were brave. But he might have sung, "Toll for the stupid." In order to clean the hull, brave Kempenfelt and his eight hundred heroes took the serious risk of laying the vessel well over on its side, while most of the crew were below. Having made the error, they all died bravely, and our memory passes easily over the lack of a virtue we never did think much of, and dwells on the English virtues of courage and discipline. So we forget

the shocking blunder of the charge of the Light Brigade, and proudly sing the heroism of the victims Lest we flatter ourselves that this trick of defence has departed with our fathers—this reading of stupidity in terms of the tragic courage that endures its results—let us reflect that recently, after full warning, we drove a ship at top speed through a field of icebergs When we were thrilled to read how superbly those hundreds died, in the great English way, a man pointed out that they did indeed die in the English way, and that our pride was therefore ill-timed, that all that bravery was wasted, that the tragedy was in the shipwreck of intelligence. That discouraging person was an Irishman

IV

I have spoken of our social inheritance as though it were entirely English Once more let me qualify my terms Even those ancestors of ours who never left Great Britain were heirs of many civilizations—Roman, French, Italian, Greek With each world-tide some love of pure intelligence was washed up on English shores, and enriched the soil, and here and there the old stock marvelled at its own progeny But to America, much as we may sentimentally deplore it, England seems destined to be less and less the source of culture, of religion and learning Our land assimilates all races, with every ship in the harbor our old English ways of thought must crowd a little closer to make room for a new tradition If some of us do not greatly err, these newcomers are chiefly driving to the wall our inherited criticism of the intellect As surely as the severe northern climate taught our forefathers the value of the will, the social conditions from which these new citizens have escaped have taught them the power of the mind They differ from each other, but against the Anglo-Saxon they are confederated in a Greek love of knowledge, in a Greek assurance that sin and misery are the fruit of ignorance, and that to know is to achieve virtue They join forces at once with that earlier arrival from Greece, the scientific spirit, which like all the immigrants has done our hard work and put up with our

contempt. Between this rising host that follow intelligence, and the old camp that put their trust in a stout heart, a firm will, and a strong hand, the fight is on. Our college men will be in the thick of it. If they do not take sides, they will at least be battered in the scuffle. At this moment they are readily divided into those who wish to be men—whatever that means—and those who wish to be intelligent men, and those who, unconscious of blasphemy or humor, prefer not to be intelligent, but to do the will of God.

When we consider the nature of the problems to be solved in our day, it seems—to many of us, at least—that these un-English arrivals are correct, that intelligence is the virtue we particularly need. Courage and steadfastness we cannot do without, so long as two men dwell on the earth, but it is time to discriminate in our praise of these virtues. If you want to get out of prison, what you need is the key to the lock. If you cannot get that, have courage and steadfastness. Perhaps the modern world has got into a kind of prison, and what is needed is the key to the lock. If none of the old virtues exactly fits, why should it seem ignoble to admit it? England for centuries has got on better by sheer character than some other nations by sheer intelligence, but there is after all a relation between the kind of problem and the means we should select to solve it. Not all problems are solved by will-power. When England overthrew Bonaparte, it was not his intelligence she overthrew, the contest involved other things besides intelligence, and she wore him out in the matter of physical endurance. The enemy that comes to her as a visible host or armada she can still close with and throttle, but when the foe arrives as an arrow that flieth by night, what avail the old sinews, the old stoutness of heart! We Americans face the same problems, and are too much inclined to oppose to them similar obsolete armor. We make a moral issue of an economic or social question, because it seems ignoble to admit it is simply a question for intelligence. Like the medicine-man, we use oratory and invoke our hereditary divinities, when the patient needs only a little quiet, or permission to get out of bed. We applaud those leaders who warm to their work—

who, when they cannot open a door, threaten to kick it in In the philosopher's words, we curse the obstacles of life as though they were devils But they are not devils They are obstacles.

v

Perhaps my question as to what you think of intelligence has been pushed far enough But I cannot leave the subject without a confession of faith

None of the reasons here suggested will explain the true worship of intelligence, whether we worship it as the scientific spirit, or as scholarship, or as any other reliance upon the mind. We really seek intelligence not for the answers it may suggest to the problems of life, but because we believe it is life, not for aid in making the will of God prevail, but because we believe it is the will of God We love it as we love virtue, for its own sake, and we believe it is only virtue's other and more precise name We believe that the virtues wait upon intelligence—literally wait, in the history of the race Whatever is elemental in man—love, hunger, fear—has obeyed from the beginning the discipline of intelligence We are told that to kill one's aging parents was once a demonstration of solicitude, about the same time men hungered for raw meat and feared the sun's eclipse Filial love, hunger, and fear are still motives to conduct, but intelligence has directed them to other ends If we no longer hang the thief or flog the schoolboy, it is not that we think less harshly of theft or laziness, but that intelligence has found a better persuasion to honesty and enterprise

We believe that even in religion, in the most intimate room of the spirit, intelligence long ago proved itself the master-virtue Its inward office from the beginning was to decrease fear and increase opportunity, its outward effect was to rob the altar of its sacrifice and the priest of his mysteries Little wonder that from the beginning the disinterestedness of the accredited custodians of all temples has been tested by the kind of welcome they gave to intelligence How many heca-

tombs were offered on more shores than that of Aulis, by seamen waiting for a favorable wind, before intelligence found out a boat that could tack! The altar was deserted, the religion revised—fear of the uncontrollable changing into delight in the knowledge that is power. We contemplate with satisfaction the law by which in our long history one religion has driven out another, as one hypothesis supplants another in astronomy or mathematics. The faith that needs the fewest altars, the hypothesis that leaves least unexplained, survives, and the intelligence that changes most fears into opportunity is most divine.

We believe this beneficent operation of intelligence was swerving not one degree from its ancient course when under the name of the scientific spirit it once more laid its influence upon religion. If the shock here seemed too violent, if the purpose of intelligence here seemed to be not revision but contradiction, it was only because religion was invited to digest an unusually large amount of intelligence all at once. Moreover, it is not certain that devout people were more shocked by Darwinism than the pious mariners were by the first boat that could tack. Perhaps the sacrifices were not abandoned all at once.

But the lover of intelligence must be patient with those who cannot readily share his passion. Some pangs the mind will inflict upon the heart. It is a mistake to think that men are united by elemental affections. Our affections divide us. We strike roots in immediate time and space, and fall in love with our locality, the customs and the language in which we were brought up. Intelligence unites us with mankind, by leading us in sympathy to other times, other places, other customs, but first the prejudiced roots of affection must be pulled up. These are the old pangs of intelligence, which still comes to set a man at variance against his father, saying, "He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me."

Yet, if intelligence begins in a pang, it proceeds to a vision. Through measureless time its office has been to make of life an opportunity, to make goodness articulate, to make virtue

a fact In history at least, if not yet in the individual, Plato's faith has come true, that sin is but ignorance, and knowledge and virtue are one But all that intelligence has accomplished dwindles in comparison with the vision it suggests and warrants Beholding this long liberation of the human spirit, we foresee, in every new light of the mind, one unifying mind, wherein the human race shall know its destiny and proceed to it with satisfaction, as an idea moves to its proper conclusion, we conceive of intelligence at last as the infinite order, wherein man, when he enters it, shall find himself

Meanwhile he continues to find his virtues by successive insights into his needs. Let us cultivate insight

"O Wisdom of the Most High,
That reachest from the beginning to the end,
And dost order all things in strength and grace,
Teach us now the way of understanding"

THE MORAL OBLIGATION TO BE INTELLIGENT
AND OTHER ESSAYS (1921)

Frank Moore Colby

CLARENCE DAY, that crippled little man with the gallant heart, who wrote *This Simian World*, *God and My Father*, *Life with Father*, and *Life with Mother*, edited with an introduction *The Colby Papers* and Clifton Fadiman brought further attention to Colby in *Reading I've Liked*. But let us bring a little more attention.

Frank Moore Colby (1865-1925) graduated from Columbia College, later taught history at Amherst and Columbia, and economics at New York University. But in 1898 he began his thirty year editorship of the *International Year Book*, later called the *New International Year Book*, and was the principal editor of two editions of the *New International Encyclopaedia*, 1900-03 and 1913-15.

However, this heavy work and much more like it did not blunt the fine edge of Colby's mind nor prevent him from contributing numerous essays to various magazines down through the years. The titles of three collections published during his lifetime suggest his urbane point of view: *Imaginary Obligations*, *Constrained Attitudes* and *The Margin of Hesitation*.

If anyone can read of the efforts of the middle-aged encyclopaedist to talk French and still keep a straight face, he is beyond redemption.

Confessions of a Gallomaniac

DOWN to the outbreak of the war I had no more desire to converse with a Frenchman in his own language than with a modern Greek I thought I understood French well enough for my own purposes, because I had read it off and on for twenty years, but when the war aroused sympathies and sharpened curiosities that I had not felt before, I realized the width of the chasm that cut me off from what I wished to feel Nor could it be bridged by any of the academic, natural, or commercial methods that I knew of They were either too slow or they led in directions that I did not wish to go I tried a phonograph, and after many bouts with it I acquired part of a sermon by Bossuet and real fluency in discussing a quinsy sore throat with a Paris physician, in case I ever went there and had one I then took fourteen conversation lessons from a Mme Carnet, and being rather well on in years at the start, I should, if I had kept on diligently, have been able at the age of eighty-five to inquire faultlessly my way to the post-office I could already ask for butter and sing a song written by Henry IV—when my teacher went to France to take care of her half-brother's children I will say this for Mme Carnet, I came to understand perfectly the French for all her personal and family affairs No human being has ever confided in me so abundantly as she did No human being has ever so sternly repressed any answering confidences of my own Her method of instruction, if it was one, was that of jealous, relentless, unbridled soliloquy

Thrown on the world with no power of sustaining a conversation on any other subject than the members of the Carnet family, I nevertheless resolved to take no more lessons but to

hunt down French people and make them talk. What I really needed was a governess to take me to and from my office and into the park at noon, but at my age that was out of the question. Then began a career of hypocritical benevolence I scraped acquaintance with every Frenchman whom I heard talking English very badly, and I became immensely interested in his welfare. I formed the habit of introducing visiting Frenchmen to French-speaking Americans, and sitting, with open mouth, in the flow of their conversation. Then I fell in with M. Bernou, the commissioner who was over here buying guns, and whose English and my French were so much alike that we agreed to interchange them. We met daily for two weeks and walked for an hour in the park, each tearing at the other's language. Our conversations, as I look back on them, must have run about like this:

"It calls to walk," said he, smiling brilliantly

"It is good morning," said I, "better than I had extended"

"I was at you yestairday ze morning, but I deed not find"

"I was obliged to leap early," said I, "and I was busy standing up straight all around the forenoon"

"The book I prayed you send, he came, and I thank, but positively are you not deranged?"

"Don't talk," said I. "Never talk again. It was really nothing anywhere I had been very happy, I reassure"

"Pardon, I glide, I glode. There was the hide of a banane. Did I crash you?"

"I noticed no insults," I replied. "You merely gnawed my arm."

Gestures and smiles of perfect understanding

I do not know whether Bernou, who like myself was middle-aged, felt as I did on these occasions, but by the suppression of every thought that I could not express in my childish vocabulary, I came to feel exactly like a child. They said I ought to think in French and I tried to do so, but thinking in French, when there is so little French to think with, divests the mind of its acquisitions of forty years. Experience slips

away for there are not words enough to lay hold of it. Knowledge of good and evil does not exist, the sins have no names, and the mind under its linguistic limitations is like a rather defective toy Noah's ark. From the point of view of Bernou's and my vocabulary, Central Park was as the Garden of Eden after six months—new and unnamed things everywhere. A dog, a tree, a statue taxed all our powers of description, and on a complex matter like a policeman our minds could not meet at all. We could only totter together a few steps in any mental direction. Yet there was a real pleasure in this earnest interchange of insipidities and they were highly valued on each side. For my part I shall always like Bernou, and feel toward him as my childhood's friend. I wonder if he noticed that I was an old, battered man, bothered with a tiresome profession. I certainly never suspected that he was. His language utterly failed to give me that impression.

After I lost Bernou I fastened upon an unfrocked priest who had come over here and gone into the shoe trade—a small, foxy man, who regarded me, I think, in the light of an aggressor. He wanted to become completely American and forget France, and as I was trying to reverse the process, I rather got in his way. He could talk of mediaeval liturgies and his present occupation, but nothing in between, and as he spoke English very well, his practical mind revolted at the use of a medium of communication in which one of us almost strangled when there was another available in which we both were at ease. I could not pump much French out of him. He would burst into English rather resentfully. Then I took to the streets at lunch-time and tried news-dealers, book-shops, restaurants, invented imaginary errands, bought things that I did not want, and exchanged them for objects even less desirable. That kept a little conversation going day by day, but on the whole it was a dry season. It is a strange thing. There are more than thirty thousand of them in the city of New York, and I had always heard that the French are a clannish folk and hate to learn another language, but most of my overtures in French brought only English upon me. The more pains I took the more desirable it seemed to them that I should be

spared the trouble of continuing I was always diving into French and they were always pulling me out again. They thought they were humane

French people hate broken French worse than most of us hate broken English But when dragged out into the light of English I tried to talk just as foolishly in order that they might think it was not really my French that was the matter with me Sometimes that worked quite well Finding me just as idiotic in my own language they went back to theirs It certainly worked well with my friend M Bartet, a paralytic tobacconist in the West Thirties near the river, to whom my relation was for several months that of a grandchild, though I believe we were of the same age He tried to form my character by bringing me up on such praiseworthy episodes of his early life as he thought I was able to grasp

Now at the end of a long year of these persistent puerilities I am able to report two definite results In the first place a sense of my incapacity and ignorance infinitely vaster than when I began, and in the second a profound distrust, possibly vindictive in its origin, of all Americans in the city of New York who profess an acquaintance with French culture, including teachers, critics, theater audiences, lecture audiences, and patronesses of visiting Frenchmen

It was perhaps true, as people said at the time, that a certain French theatrical experiment in New York could not continue for the simple reason that it was too good a thing for the theater-going public to support It may be that the precise equivalent of the enterprise, even if not hampered by a foreign language, could not have permanently endured Yet from what I saw of its audiences, critics, enthusiasts, and from what I know of the American Gallophile generally, including myself, I believe the linguistic obstacle to have been more serious than they would have us suppose--serious enough to account for the situation without dragging in our aesthetic incapacity It was certainly an obstacle that less than one-half of any audience ever succeeded in surmounting

I do not mean that the rest of the audience got nothing out of it for so expressive were the players by other means

than words, that they often sketched the play out in pantomime. The physical activities of the troupe did not arise, as some of the critics declared, from the vivacity of the Gallic temperament, nor were they assumed, as others believed, because in the seventeenth century French actors had been acrobats. These somewhat exaggerated gestures were occasioned by the perception that the majority of the spectators were beginners in French. They were supplied by these ever-tactful people as a running translation for a large body of self-improving Americans.

I do not blame other Americans for dabbling in French, since I myself am the worst of dabblers, but I see no reason why any of us should pretend that it is anything more than dabbling. The usual way of reading French does not lead even to an acquaintance with French literature. Everybody knows that words in a living language in order to be understood have to be lived with. They are not felt as a part of living literature when you see them pressed out and labeled in a glossary, but only when you hear them fly about. A word is not a definite thing susceptible of dictionary explanation. It is a cluster of associations, reminiscent of the sort of men that used it, primness, violences, pedantries, or platitudes. It hardly seems necessary to say that words in a living literature ought to ring in the ear with the sounds that really belong to them, or that poetry without an echo cannot be felt.

It may be that there is no way out of it. Perhaps it is inevitable that the colleges which had so long taught the dead languages as if they were buried should now teach the living ones as if they were dead. But there is no need of pretending that this formal acquaintance with books results in an appreciation of literature. No sense of the intimate quality of a writer can be founded on a verbal vacuum. His plots, his place in literature, his central motives, and the opinion of his critics could all be just as adequately conveyed, if his books were studied in the language of the deaf and dumb. Of course, one may be drawn to an author by that process but it would hardly be the artistic attraction of literature, it is as if one felt drawn to a woman by an interest exclusively in her bones.

Elementary as these remarks may seem I offer them to Gallophiles without apology On the contrary I rather fear that I am writing over their heads

THE COLBY PAPERS (1926)

George Santayana

"HOW came a child born in Spain of Spanish parents to be educated in Boston and write in the English language?" once asked Santavana, as if himself surprised

Briefly, Josefina Borras, the orphaned daughter of a Spanish official who had succumbed at his post in the Philippines, met and married in Manila a young blue-blooded merchant from Boston, George Sturgis. It was agreed between them that in case of his death she would bring up their children in his family home—and to Boston they sailed after his death in 1857. A few years later she went to Spain for a visit, encountered again a gentleman she had known in the Philippines, Augustin Ruiz de Santavana, married him and gave birth to a son in 1863. After various mutual concessions she returned alone to Boston to bring up her Sturgis children. In 1872 nine-year-old George Santayana was brought over from Spain by his father and left in the mother's care. So it was that Santayana went to the Boston Latin School, graduated from Harvard, taught philosophy at Harvard from 1889 to 1912, and wrote *The Sense of Beauty*, *The Life of Reason* and other classical volumes. But he was never thoroughly at home in Cambridge and his noted colleagues such as James, Royce, Palmer and Munsterberg were never quite comfortable with him.

In 1912 Santavana resigned from Harvard and left the United States, never to return. During the first World War he lived contentedly in England and wrote the "soliloquies" that appeared a few years later in *Soliloquies in England and Later Soliloquies Little Essays, Drawn from the writings of George Santayana* (1924) by Logan Pearsall Smith with the collaboration of the author, moves from his first volume, *The*

Sense of Beauty, through the five volumes of *The Life of Reason*, to *Egotism in German Philosophy*. The very fact that Santayana assisted with the Smith volume assures us that the "little essays" are not merely fragments torn out of context to make a compilation.

Leaving England and retiring to Italy, Santayana composed *Scepticism and Animal Faith* and the four related volumes on *The Realms of Being*, a remarkable philosophical novel, *The Last Puritan*, three volumes of autobiography, and a huge work of socio-political speculation, *Dominations and Powers*. In his last years he lived under the protection of the Blue Nuns in a convent in Rome, and died there in September, 1952, at the age of eighty-eight.

There are so many flawless vignettes in the *Soliloquies*, such as "Skylarks," "At Heaven's Gate" and "Dickens," that it was painful to choose one alone.

Tipperary

WHAT a strange pleasure there is sometimes in seeing what we expected, or hearing what we knew was a fact! The dream then seems really to hold together and truth to be positively true. The bells that announced the Armistice brought me no news, a week sooner or a week later they had to ring. Certainly if the purpose of the war had been conquest or victory, nobody had achieved it, but the purposes of things, and especially of wars, are imputed to them rhetorically, the impulses at work being too complicated and changeful to be easily surveyed, and in this case, for the French and the English, the moving impulse had been defence, they had been sustained through incredible trials by the awful necessity of not yielding. That strain had now been relaxed, and as the conduct of men is determined by present forces and not by future advantages, they could have no heart to fight on. It seemed enough to them that the wanton blow had been parried, that the bully had begged for mercy. It was amusing to hear him now. He said that further bloodshed this time would be horrible, his tender soul longed to get home safely, to call it quits, and to take a long breath and plan a new combination before the next bout. His collapse had been evident for days and months, yet these bells that confirmed the fact were pleasant to hear. Those mean little flags, hung out here and there by private initiative in the streets of Oxford, had almost put on a look of triumph, the very sunlight and brisk autumnal air seemed to have heard the tidings, and to invite the world to begin to live again at ease. Certainly many a sad figure and many a broken soul must slink henceforth on crutches, a mere survival, but they, too, will die off gradually. The grass soon grows over a grave.

So musing, I suddenly heard a once familiar strain, now long despised and out of favour, the old tune of *Tipperary*. In a coffee-house frequented at that hour some wounded officers from the hospital at Somerville were singing it, standing near the bar, they were breaking all rules, both of surgeons and of epicures, and were having champagne in the morning. And good reason they had for it. They were reprieved, they should never have to go back to the front, their friends—such as were left—would all come home alive. Instinctively the old grumbling, good-natured, sentimental song, which they used to sing when they first joined, came again into their minds. It had been indeed a long, long way to Tipperary. But they had trudged on and had come round full circle, they were in Tipperary at last.

I wonder what they think *Tipperary* means—for this is a mystical song. Probably they are willing to leave it vague, as they do their notions of honour or happiness or heaven. Their soldiering is over, they remember, with a strange, proud grief, their comrades who died to make this day possible, hardly believing that it ever would come, they are overjoyed, yet half ashamed, to be safe themselves, they forget their wounds, they see a green vista before them, a jolly, busy, sporting, loving life in the old familiar places. Everything will go on, they fancy, as if nothing had happened.

Good honest unguided creatures! They are hardly out of the fog of war when they are lost in the fog of peace. If experience could teach mankind anything, how different our morals and our politics would be, how clear, how tolerant, how steady! If we knew ourselves, our conduct at all times would be absolutely decided and consistent, and a pervasive sense of vanity and humour would disinfect all our passions, if we knew the world. As it is, we live experimentally, moodily, in the dark, each generation breaks its eggshell with the same haste and assurance as the last, pecks at the same indigestible pebbles, dreams the same dreams, or others just as absurd, and if it hears anything of what former men have learned by experience, it corrects their maxims by its first impressions, and rushes down any untrodden path which it

finds alluring, to die in its own way, or become wise too late and to no purpose These young men are no rustics, they are no fools, and yet they have passed through the most terrible ordeal, they have seen the mad heart of this world riven and unmasked, they have had long vigils before battle, long nights tossing with pain, in which to meditate on the spectacle, and yet they have learned nothing The young barbarians want to be again at play If it were to be only cricket or boating, it would be innocent enough, but they are going to gamble away their lives and their country, taking their chances in the lottery of love and of business and of politics, with a sporting chance thrown in, perhaps, of heaven They are going to shut out from view everything except their topmost instincts and easy habits, and to trust to luck Yet the poor fellows think they are safe! They think that the war—perhaps the last of all wars—is over!

Only the dead are safe, only the dead have seen the end of war Not that non-existence deserves to be called peace, it is only by an illusion of contrast and a pathetic fallacy that we are tempted to call it so The church has a poetical and melancholy prayer, that the souls of the faithful departed may rest in peace If in that sigh there lingers any fear that, when a tomb is disturbed, the unhappy ghost is doomed to walk more often abroad, the fear is mad, and if it merely expresses the hope that dead men's troubles are over, the wish is superfluous, but perhaps we may gloss the old superstition, and read into it the rational aspiration that all souls in other spheres, or in the world to come upon earth, might learn to live at peace with God and with things That would be something worth praying for, but I am afraid it is asking too much God—I mean the sum of all possible good—is immutable, to make our peace with him it is we, not he, that must change We should need to discover, and to pursue singly, the happiness proper to our nature, including the accidents of race and sex and the very real advantages of growing old and of not living for ever, and we should need to respect without envying all other forms of the good As to the world of existence it is certainly fluid, and by judicious pressure we may

coax some parts of it into greater conformity with our wills, yet it is so vast, and crawls through such ponderous, insidious revolutions, all so blind and so mimical to one another, that in order to live at peace with things we should need to acquire a marvellous plasticity, or a splendid indifference. We should have to make peace with the fact of war. It is the stupid obstinacy of our self-love that produces tragedy, and makes us angry with the world. Free life has the spirit of comedy. It rejoices in the seasonable beauty of each new thing, and laughs at its decay, covets no possessions, demands no agreement, and strives to sustain nothing in being except a gallant spirit of courage and truth, as each fresh adventure may renew it.

This gallant spirit of courage and truth, you young men had it in those early days when you first sang *Tipperary*, have you it still, I wonder, when you repeat the song? Some of you, no doubt I have seen in some of you the smile that makes light of pain, the sturdy humility that accepts mutilation and faces disability without repining or shame, armless and legless men are still God's creatures, and even if you cannot see the sun you can bask in it, and there is joy on earth—perhaps the deepest and most primitive joy—even in that. But others of you, though you were driven to the war by contagious example, or by force, are natural cowards, you are perhaps superior persons, intellectual snobs, and are indignant at having been interrupted in your important studies and made to do useless work. You are disgusted at the stupidity of all the generals, and whatever the Government does is an outrage to your moral sense. You were made sick at the thought of the war before you went to it, and you are sicker of it now. You are pacifists, and you suspect that the Germans, who were not pacifists, were right after all. I notice you are not singing *Tipperary* this morning, you are too angry to be glad, and you wish it to be understood that you can't endure such a vulgar air. You are willing, however, to sip your champagne with the rest, in hospital you seem to have come forward a little socially, but you find the wine too dry or too sweet, and you are making a wry face at it.

Ah, my delicate friends, if the soul of a philosopher may venture to address you, let me whisper this counsel in your ears Reserve a part of your wrath, you have not seen the worst yet. You suppose that this war has been a criminal blunder and an exceptional horror, you imagine that before long reason will prevail, and all these inferior people that govern the world will be swept aside, and your own party will reform everything and remain always in office You are mistaken. This war has given you your first glimpse of the ancient, fundamental, normal state of the world, your first taste of reality It should teach you to dismiss all your philosophies of progress or of a governing reason as the babble of dreamers who walk through one world mentally beholding another I don't mean that you or they are fools, heaven forbid. You have too much mind It is easy to behave very much like other people and yet be possessed inwardly by a narcotic dream I am sure the flowers—and you resemble flowers yourselves, though a bit wilted—if they speculate at all, construct idealisms which, like your own, express their inner sensibility and their experience of the weather, without much resemblance to the world at large Their thoughts, like yours, are all positings and deductions and asseverations of what ought to be, whilst the calm truth is marching on unheeded outside No great harm ensues, because the flowers are rooted in their places and adjusted to the prevailing climate It doesn't matter what they think You, too, in your lodgings in Chelsea, quite as in Lhassa or in Mount Athos, may live and die happy in your painted cells It is the primitive and the ultimate office of the mind to supply such a sanctuary But if you are ever driven again into the open, if the course of events should be so rapid, that you could catch the drift of it in your short life (since you despise tradition), then you must prepare for a ruder shock There is eternal war in nature, a war in which every cause is ultimately lost and every nation destroyed. War is but resisted change, and change must needs be resisted so long as the organism it would destroy retains any vitality Peace itself means discipline at home and invulnerability abroad—two forms of permanent virtual war,

peace requires so vigorous an internal regimen that every germ of dissolution or infection shall be repelled before it reaches the public soul. This war has been a short one, and its ravages slight in comparison with what remains standing a severe war is one in which the entire manhood of a nation is destroyed, its cities razed, and its women and children driven into slavery. In this instance the slaughter has been greater, perhaps, only because modern populations are so enormous, the disturbance has been acute only because the modern industrial system is so dangerously complex and unstable, and the expense seems prodigious because we were so extravagantly rich. Our society was a sleepy glutton who thought himself immortal and squealed inexpressibly, like a stuck pig, at the first prick of the sword. An ancient city would have thought this war, or one relatively as costly, only a normal incident, and certainly the Germans will not regard it otherwise.

Existence, being a perpetual generation, involves aspiration, and its aspiration envelops it in an atmosphere of light, the joy and the beauty of being, which is the living heaven, but for the same reason existence, in its texture, involves a perpetual and a living hell—the conflict and mutual hatred of its parts, each endeavouring to devour its neighbour's substance in the vain effort to live for ever. Now, the greater part of most men's souls dwells in this hell, and ends there. One of their chief torments is the desire to live without dying—continual death being a part of the only possible and happy life. We wish to exist materially, and yet resent the plastic stress, the very force of material being, which is daily creating and destroying us. Certainly war is hell, as you, my fair friends, are fond of repeating, but so is rebellion against war. To live well you must be victorious. It is with war as with the passion of love, which is a war of another kind—war at first against the beloved for favour and possession, war afterwards against the rest of the world for the beloved's sake. Often love, too, is a torment and shameful, but it has its laughing triumphs, and the attempt to eliminate it is a worse torture, and more degrading. When was a coward at peace?

Homer, who was a poet of war, did not disguise its horrors nor its havoc, but he knew it was the shield of such happiness as is possible on earth If Hector had not scoured the plain in his chariot, Paris could not have piped upon the slopes of Ida, nor sported with his sheep and his goddesses upon the green The merchants of Crete or Phoenicia could not have drawn up their black keels upon the beach, if the high walls of Ilium had not cast their protecting shadow on their bales of merchandise, their bags of coin, and their noisy bargaining When Hector was no more and the walls were a heap of dust, all the uses of peace vanished also ruin and utter meanness came to inhabit that land, and still inhabit it Nor is war, which makes peace possible, without occasions in which a free spirit, not too much attached to existence, may come into its own Homer shows us how his heroes could gather even from battle a certain harvest of tenderness and nobility, and how above their heads, half seen through the clouds of dust and of pain, flew the winged chariots of the gods, and music mingled with their banquet.

Be sad if you will, there is always reason for sadness, since the good which the world brings forth is so fugitive and bought at so great a price, but be brave If you think happiness worth enjoying, think it worth defending Nothing you can lose by dying is half so precious as the readiness to die, which is man's charter of nobility, life would not be worth having without the freedom of soul and the friendship with nature which that readiness brings The things we know and love on earth are, and should be, transitory, they are, as were the things celebrated by Homer, at best the song or oracle by which heaven is revealed in our time We must pass with them into eternity, not in the end only but continually, as a phrase passes into its meaning, and since they are part of us and we of them, we should accompany them with a good grace it would be desolation to survive The eternal is always present, as the flux of time in one sense never is, since it is all either past or future, but this elusive existence in passing sets before the spirit essences in which spirit rests, and which can never vary, as a dramatic poet

creates a character which many an actor afterwards on many a night may try to enact. Of course, the flux of matter carries the poets away too, they become old-fashioned, and nobody wishes any longer to play their characters, but each age has its own gods Time is like an enterprising manager always bent on staging some new and surprising production, without knowing very well what it will be Our good mother Psyche, who is a convolution of this material flux, breeds us accordingly to mindlessness and anxiety, out of which it is hard for our youthful intellect to wean itself to peace, by escaping into the essential eternity of everything it sees and loves So long as the world goes round we shall see Tipperary only, as it were, out of the window of our troop-train Your heart and mine may remain there, but it's a long, long way that the world has to go

SOLILOQUIES IN ENGLAND
AND LATER SOLILOQUIES (1922)

Henry L. Mencken

H. L. MENCKEN (1880-) the incorrigible gentleman from Baltimore, has covered his own life in the three volumes, *Happy Days*, *Newspaper Days* and *Heathen Days*, collected as *The Days of H. L. Mencken*. From the Baltimore *Evening Herald* and the *Evening Sun* he passed to the editorship, with George Jean Nathan, of *The Smart Set*. Nine years with *The Smart Set* prepared them for the founding of *The American Mercury* in 1924, and nine more years for Mencken alone of rollicking comment. However Mencken did not give up his connection with the *Sun* entirely until 1939 and in recent years he has remarked nostalgically

"There is something delightful about getting an idea on paper while it is still hot and charming, and seeing it in print before it begins to stale and pale. My happiest days have been spent in crowded press-stands, recording and belaboring events that were portentous in their day but are now forgotten."

That Mencken was destined to be an iconoclast was clearly indicated by his early books on Shaw and Nietzsche. That he was much more than an iconoclast was shown by *A Book of Prefaces* (1917) with its three gallant chapters on the still neglected James G. Huneker, Joseph Conrad and Theodore Dreiser. That he was much more than a journalist was proved by his monumental study of *The American Language*, the first edition of which appeared in 1918.

An American who did not live through the years of Mencken's *Smart Set* and *American Mercury* cannot imagine the stirring effect of his lusty, gusty writing and editing. Even when he was infuriating he was stimulating and almost always amusing. It is not irresponsible to say that if Socrates was a

gadfly for ancient Athens, Mencken played somewhat the same role in the Republic for a decade or two

A few years ago Mencken estimated that he had written well over 5,000,000 words and he gathered some 230,000 of them from the six volumes of the *Prejudices* and several other books that were out of print, to form *A Mencken Chrestomathy*

Here is a notorious sample

The Sahara of the Bozart

*From PREJUDICES SECOND SERIES, 1920, pp 136-54
This was first printed, in shorter form, in the New York Evening Mail, Nov 13, 1917 It produced a ferocious reaction in the South, and I was belabored for months, and even years afterward in a very extravagant manner The essay in its final form, as it is here reproduced, dates sadly, but I have let it stand as a sort of historical document On the heels of the violent denunciations of the elder Southerners there soon came a favorable response from the more civilized youngsters, and there is reason to believe that my attack had something to do with that revival of Southern letters which followed in the middle 1920s*

Alas, for the South! Her books have grown fewer—
She never was much given to literature

IN THE lamented J Gordon Coogler, author of these elegaic lines, there was the insight of a true poet He was the last bard of Dixie, at least in the legitimate line Down there a poet is now almost as rare as an oboe-player, a dry-point etcher or a metaphysician It is, indeed, amazing to contemplate so vast a vacuity One thinks of the interstellar spaces, of the colossal reaches of the now mythical ether. Nearly the whole of Europe could be lost in that stupendous region of fat farms, shoddy cities and paralyzed cerebrums one could throw in France, Germany and Italy, and still have room for the British Isles And yet, for all its size and all its wealth and all the “progress” it babbles of, it is almost as sterile, artistically, intellectually, culturally, as the Sahara Desert. There are single acres in Europe that house more first-rate

men than all the states south of the Potomac, there are probably single square miles in America If the whole of the late Confederacy were to be engulfed by a tidal wave tomorrow, the effect upon the civilized minority of men in the world would be but little greater than that of a flood on the Yang-tse-kiang It would be impossible in all history to match so complete a drying-up of a civilization

I say a civilization because that is what, in the old days, the South had, despite the Baptist and Methodist barbarism that reigns down there now More, it was a civilization of manifold excellences—perhaps the best that the Western Hemisphere has ever seen—undoubtedly the best that These States have ever seen Down to the middle of the last century, and even beyond, the main hatchery of ideas on this side of the water was across the Potomac bridges The New England shopkeepers and theologians never really developed a civilization, all they ever developed was a government They were, at their best, tawdry and tacky fellows, oafish in manner and devoid of imagination, one searches the books in vain for mention of a salient Yankee gentleman, as well look for a Welsh gentleman But in the South there were men of delicate fancy, urbane instinct and aristocratic manner—in brief, superior men—in brief, gentry To politics, their chief diversion, they brought active and original minds It was there that nearly all the political theories we still cherish and suffer under came to birth It was there that the crude dogmatism of New England was refined and humanized It was there, above all, that some attention was given to the art of living—that life got beyond and above the state of a mere infliction and became an exhilarating experience A certain noble spaciousness was in the ancient Southern scheme of things The Ur-Confederate had leisure He liked to toy with ideas He was hospitable and tolerant He had the vague thing that we call culture

But consider the condition of his late empire today The picture gives one the creeps It is as if the Civil War stamped out every last bearer of the torch, and left only a mob of peasants on the field One thinks of Asia Minor, resigned to

Armenians, Greeks and wild swine, of Poland abandoned to the Poles In all that gargantuan paradise of the fourth-rate there is not a single picture gallery worth going into, or a single orchestra capable of playing the nine symphonies of Beethoven, or a single opera-house, or a single theater devoted to decent plays, or a single public monument (built since the war) that is worth looking at, or a single workshop devoted to the making of beautiful things Once you have counted Robert Loveman (an Ohioan by birth) and John McClure (an Oklahoman) you will not find a single Southern poet above the rank of a neighborhood rhymester Once you have counted James Branch Cabell (a lingering survivor of the *ancien régime* a scarlet dragon-fly imbedded in opaque amber) you will not find a single Southern prose writer who can actually write. And once you have—but when you come to critics, musical composers, painters, sculptors, architects, and the like, you will have to give it up, for there is not even a bad one between the Potomac mud-flats and the Gulf Nor an historian. Nor a sociologist Nor a philosopher Nor a theologian Nor a scientist In all these fields the South is an awe-inspiring blank—a brother to Portugal, Serbia and Albania

Consider, for example, the present estate and dignity of Virginia—in the great days indubitably the premier American state, the mother of Presidents and statesmen, the home of the first American university worthy of the name, the *arbiter elegantiarum* of the western world. Well, observe Virginia to-day It is years since a first-rate man, save only Cabell, has come out of it, it is years since an idea has come out of it The old aristocracy went down the red gullet of war, the poor white trash are now in the saddle Politics in Virginia is cheap, ignorant, parochial, idiotic, there is scarcely a man in office above the rank of a professional job-seeker, the political doctrine that prevails is made up of hand-me-downs from the bumpkinry of the Middle West—Bryanism, Prohibition, vice crusading, all that sort of filthy claptrap, the administration of the law is turned over to professors of Puritanism and espionage, a Washington or a Jefferson, dumped

there by some act of God, would be denounced as a scoundrel and jailed overnight.

Elegance, *esprit*, culture? Virginia has no art, no literature, no philosophy, no mind or aspiration of her own. Her education has sunk to the Baptist seminary level, not a single contribution to human knowledge has come out of her colleges in twenty-five years, she spends less than half upon her common schools, *per capita*, than any Northern state spends. In brief, an intellectual Gobi or Lapland. Urbanity, *politesse*, chivalry? Go to! It was in Virginia that they invented the device of searching for contraband whisky in women's underwear.

There remains, at the top, a ghost of the old aristocracy, a bit wistful and infinitely charming. But it has lost all its old leadership to fabulous monsters from the lower depths, it is submerged in an industrial plutocracy that is ignorant and ignominious. The mind of the state, as it is revealed to the nation, is pathetically naïve and inconsequential. It no longer reacts with energy and elasticity to great problems. It has fallen to the bombastic trivialities of the camp-meeting and the chautauqua. Its foremost exponent—if so flabby a thing may be said to have an exponent—is a statesman whose name is synonymous with empty words, broken pledges and false pretenses. One could no more imagine a Lee or a Washington in the Virginia of to-day than one could imagine a Huxley in Nicaragua.

I choose the Old Dominion, not because I disdain it, but precisely because I esteem it. It is, by long odds, the most civilized of the Southern states, now as always. It has sent a host of credible sons northward, the stream kept running into our own time Virginians, even the worst of them, show the effects of a great tradition. They hold themselves above other Southerners, and with sound pretension. If one turns to such a commonwealth as Georgia the picture becomes far darker. There the liberated lower orders of whites have borrowed the worst commercial bounderism of the Yankee and superimposed it upon a culture that, at bottom, is but little removed from savagery. Georgia is at once the home of the cotton-mill sweater and of the most noisy and vapid sort of

chamber of commerce, of the Methodist parson turned Savonarola and of the lynching bee A self-respecting European, going there to live, would not only find intellectual stimulation utterly lacking, he would actually feel a certain insecurity, as if the scene were the Balkans or the China Coast There is a state with more than half the area of Italy and more population than either Denmark or Norway, and yet in thirty years it has not produced a single idea Once upon a time a Georgian printed a couple of books that attracted notice, but immediately it turned out that he was little more than an amanuensis for the local blacks—that his works were really the products, not of white Georgia, but of black Georgia Writing afterward as a white man, he swiftly subsided into the fifth rank And he is not only the glory of the literature of Georgia, he is, almost literally, the whole of the literature of Georgia—nay, of the entire art of Georgia *

Virginia is the best of the South to-day, and Georgia is perhaps the worst. The one is simply senile, the other is crass, gross, vulgar and obnoxious. Between lies a vast plain of mediocrity, stupidity, lethargy, almost of dead silence In the North, of course, there is also grossness, crassness, vulgarity The North, in its way, is also stupid and obnoxious But nowhere in the North is there such complete sterility, so depressing a lack of all civilized gesture and aspiration One would find it difficult to unearth a second-rate city between the Ohio and the Pacific that isn't struggling to establish an orchestra, or setting up a little theater, or going in for an art gallery, or making some other effort to get into touch with civilization These efforts often fail, and sometimes they succeed rather absurdly, but under them there is at least an impulse that deserves respect, and that is the impulse to seek beauty and to experiment with ideas, and so to give the life of every day a certain dignity and purpose. You will find no such impulse in the South There are no committees down there cadging subscriptions for orchestras, if a string quartet is ever heard

*The reference here, of course, was to Poet Chandler Harris

there, the news of it has never come out, an opera troupe, when it roves the land, is a nine days' wonder The little theater movement has swept the whole country, enormously augmenting the public interest in sound plays, giving new dramatists their chance, forcing reforms upon the commercial theater Everywhere else the wave rolls high—but along the line of the Potomac it breaks upon a rock-bound shore There is no little theater beyond There is no gallery of pictures No artist ever gives exhibitions No one talks of such things No one seems to be interested in such things

As for the cause of this unanimous torpor and doltishness, this curious and almost pathological estrangement from everything that makes for a civilized culture, I have hinted at it already, and now state it again The South has simply been drained of all its best blood The vast blood-letting of the Civil War half exterminated and wholly paralyzed the old aristocracy, and so left the land to the harsh mercies of the poor white trash, now its masters The war, of course, was not a complete massacre It spared a decent number of first-rate Southerners—perhaps even some of the very best. Moreover, other countries, notably France and Germany, have survived far more staggering butcheries, and even showed marked progress thereafter But the war not only cost a great many valuable lives, it also brought bankruptcy, demoralization and despair in its train—and so the majority of the first-rate Southerners that were left, broken in spirit and unable to live under the new dispensation, cleared out. A few went to South America, to Egypt, to the Far East Most came north They were fecund, their progeny is widely dispersed, to the great benefit of the North A Southerner of good blood almost always does well in the North He finds, even in the big cities, surroundings fit for a man of condition His peculiar qualities have a high social value, and are esteemed He is welcomed by the codfish aristocracy as one palpably superior But in the South he throws up his hands It is impossible for him to stoop to the common level He cannot brawl in politics with the grandsons of his grandfather's tenants He is unable to share their fierce jealousy of the emerging black—the cornerstone

of all their public thinking He is anaesthetic to their theological and political enthusiasms He finds himself an alien to their feasts of soul. And so he withdraws into his tower, and is heard of no more. Cabell is almost a perfect example His eyes, for years, were turned toward the past, he became a professor of the grotesque genealogizing that decaying aristocracies affect, it was only by a sort of accident that he discovered himself to be an artist The South is unaware of the fact to this day, it regards Woodrow Wilson and Col John Temple Graves as much finer stylists, and Frank L Stanton as an infinitely greater poet. If it has heard, which I doubt, that Cabell has been hoofed by the Comstocks, it unquestionably views that assault as a deserved rebuke to a fellow who indulges a lewd passion for fancy writing, and is a covert enemy to the Only True Christianity.

What is needed down there, before the vexatious public problems of the region may be intelligently approached, is a survey of the population by competent ethnologists and anthropologists The immigrants of the North have been studied at great length, and any one who is interested may now apply to the Bureau of Ethnology for elaborate data as to their racial strains, their stature and cranial indices, their relative capacity for education, and the changes that they undergo under American *Kultur* But the older stocks of the South, and particularly the emancipated and dominant poor white trash, have never been investigated scientifically, and most of the current generalizations about them are probably wrong For example, the generalization that they are purely Anglo-Saxon in blood. This I doubt very seriously The chief strain down there, I believe, is Celtic rather than Saxon, particularly in the hill country French blood, too, shows itself here and there, and so does Spanish, and so does German The last-named entered from the northward, by way of the limestone belt just east of the Alleghenies Again, it is very likely that in some parts of the South a good many of the plebeian whites have more than a trace of Negro blood Interbreeding under concubinage produced some very light half-breeds at an early day, and no doubt appreciable numbers of them went over into the white

race by the simple process of changing their abode Not long ago I read a curious article by an intelligent Negro, in which he stated that it is easy for a very light Negro to pass as white in the South on account of the fact that large numbers of Southerners accepted as white have distinctly negroid features Thus it becomes a delicate and dangerous matter for a train conductor or a hotel-keeper to challenge a suspect. But the Celtic strain is far more obvious than any of these others It not only makes itself visible in physical stigmata—e.g., leanness and dark coloring—but also in mental traits For example, the religious thought of the South is almost precisely identical with the religious thought of Wales There is the same naïve belief in an anthropomorphic Creator but little removed, in manner and desire, from an evangelical bishop, there is the same submission to an ignorant and impudent sacerdotal tyranny, and there is the same sharp contrast between doctrinal orthodoxy and private ethics Read Caradoc Evans' ironical picture of the Welsh Wesleyans in his preface to "My Neighbors," and you will be instantly reminded of the Georgia and Carolina Methodists The most booming sort of piety, in the South, is not incompatible with the theory that lynching is a benign institution Two generations ago it was not incompatible with an ardent belief in slavery

It is highly probable that some of the worst blood of western Europe flows in the veins of the Southern poor whites, now poor no longer The original strains, according to every honest historian, were extremely corrupt. Philip Alexander Bruce (a Virginian of the old gentry) says in his "Industrial History of Virginia in the Seventeenth Century" that the first native-born generation was largely illegitimate "One of the most common offenses against morality committed in the lower ranks of life in Virginia during the seventeenth century," he says, "was bastardy" The mothers of these bastards, he continues, were chiefly indentured servants, and "had belonged to the lowest class in their native country" Fanny Kemble Butler, writing of the Georgia poor whites of a century later, described them as "the most degraded race of human beings claiming an Anglo-Saxon origin that can be found on the face

of the earth—filthy, lazy, ignorant, brutal, proud, penniless savages" The Sunday-school and the chautauqua, of course, have appreciably mellowed the descendants of these "savages," and their economic progress and rise to political power have done perhaps even more, but the marks of their origin are still unpleasantly plentiful Every now and then they produce a political leader who puts their secret notions of the true, the good and the beautiful into plain words, to the amazement and scandal of the rest of the country That amazement is turned into downright incredulity when news comes that his platform has got him high office, and that he is trying to execute it.

In the great days of the South the line between the gentry and the poor whites was very sharply drawn There was absolutely no intermarriage So far as I know there is not a single instance in history of a Southerner of the upper class marrying one of the bondwomen described by Mr Bruce. In other societies characterized by class distinctions of that sort it is common for the lower class to be improved by extra-legal crosses That is to say, the men of the upper class take women of the lower class as mistresses, and out of such unions spring the extraordinary plebeians who rise sharply from the common level, and so propagate the delusion that all other plebeians would do the same thing if they had the chance—in brief, the delusion that class distinctions are merely economic and conventional, and not congenital and genuine But in the south the men of the upper classes sought their mistresses among the blacks, and after a few generations there was so much white blood in the black women that they were considerably more attractive than the unhealthy and bedraggled women of the poor whites This preference continued into our own time A Southerner of good family once told me in all seriousness that he had reached his majority before it ever occurred to him that a white woman might make quite as agreeable a mistress as the octoroons of his jejune fancy If the thing has changed of late, it is not the fault of the Southern white man, but of the Southern mulatto women The more sightly yellow gals of the region, with improving economic opportunities,

have gained self-respect, and so they are no longer as willing to enter into concubinage as their grand-dams were

As a result of this preference of the Southern gentry for mulatto mistresses there was created a series of mixed strains containing the best blood of the South, and perhaps of the whole country As another result the poor whites went unfertilized from above, and so missed the improvement that so constantly shows itself in the peasant stocks of other countries It is a commonplace that nearly all Negroes who rise above the general are of mixed blood, usually with the white predominating I know a great many Negroes, and it would be hard for me to think of an exception What is too often forgotten is that this white blood is not the blood of the poor whites but that of the old gentry The mulatto girls of the early days despised the poor whites as creatures distinctly inferior to Negroes, and it was thus almost unheard of for such a girl to enter into relations with a man of that submerged class This aversion was based upon a sound instinct. The Southern mulatto of to-day is a proof of it. Like all other half-breeds he is an unhappy man, with disquieting tendencies toward anti-social habits of thought, but he is intrinsically a better animal than the pure-blooded descendant of the old poor whites, and he not infrequently demonstrates it. It is not by accident that the Negroes of the South are making faster progress, economically and culturally, than the masses of the whites It is not by accident that the only visible aesthetic activity in the South is wholly in their hands No Southern composer has ever written music so good as that of half a dozen white-black composers who might be named Even in politics, the Negro reveals a curious superiority Despite the fact that the race question has been the main political concern of the Southern whites for two generations, to the practical exclusion of everything else, they have contributed nothing to its discussion that has impressed the rest of the world so deeply and so favorably as three or four books by Southern Negroes

Entering upon such themes, of course, one must resign one's self to a vast misunderstanding and abuse The South has not only lost its old capacity for producing ideas, it has also

taken on the worst intolerance of ignorance and stupidity Its prevailing mental attitude for several decades past has been that of its own hedge ecclesiastics All who dissent from its orthodox doctrines are scoundrels All who presume to discuss its ways realistically are damned I have had, in my day several experiences in point Once, after I had published an article on some phase of the eternal race question, a leading Southern newspaper replied by printing a column of denunciation of my father, then dead nearly twenty years—a philippic placarding him as an ignorant foreigner of dubious origin, inhabiting “the Baltimore ghetto” and speaking a dialect recalling that of Weber & Fields—two thousand words of incandescent nonsense, utterly false and beside the point, but exactly meeting the latter-day Southern notion of effective controversy. Another time, I published a short discourse on lynching, arguing that the sport was popular in the South because the backward culture of the region denied the populace more seemly recreations Among such recreations I mentioned those afforded by brass bands, symphony orchestras, boxing matches, amateur athletic contests, shoot-the-chutes, roof gardens, horse races, and so on In reply another great Southern journal denounced me as a man “of wineshop temperament, brass-jewelry tastes and pornographic predilections” In other words, brass bands, in the South, are classed with brass jewelry, and both are snares of the devil To advocate setting up symphony orchestras is pornography! Alas, when the touchy Southerner attempts a greater urbanity, the result is often even worse Some time ago a colleague of mine printed an article deplored the arrested cultural development of Georgia In reply he received a number of protests from patriotic Georgians, and all of them solemnly listed the glories of the state I indulge in a few specimens

Who has not heard of Asa G Candler, whose name is synonymous with Coca-Cola, a Georgia product?

The first Sunday-school in the world was opened in Savannah

Who does not recall with pleasure the writings of . . . Frank L. Stanton, Georgia's brilliant poet?

Georgia was the first state to organize a Boys' Corn Club in the South—Newton county, 1904

The first to suggest a common United Daughters of the Confederacy badge was Mrs Raynes, of Georgia

The first to suggest a state historian of the United Daughters of the Confederacy was Mrs C Helen Plane (Macon convention, 1896)

The first to suggest putting to music Heber's "From Green-land's Icy Mountains" was Mrs F R Goulding, of Savannah.

And so on, and so on. These proud boasts came, remember, not from obscure private persons, but from "Leading Georgians"—in one case, the state historian Curious sidelights upon the ex-Confederate mind! Another comes from a stray copy of a Negro paper It describes an ordinance lately passed by the city council of Douglas, Ga., forbidding any trouser presser, on penalty of forfeiting a \$500 bond, to engage in "pressing for both white and colored" This in a town, says the Negro paper, where practically all of the white inhabitants have "their food prepared by colored hands," "their babies cared for by colored hands," and "the clothes which they wear right next to their skins washed in houses where negroes live"—houses in which the said clothes "remain for as long as a week at a time" But if you marvel at the absurdity, keep it dark! A casual word, and the united press of the South will be upon your trail, denouncing you bitterly as a scoundrelly Yankee

Obviously, it is impossible for intelligence to flourish in such an atmosphere Free inquiry is blocked by the idiotic certainties of ignorant men The arts, save in the lower reaches of the gospel hymn, the phonograph and the chautauqua harangue, are all held in suspicion The tone of public opinion is set by an upstart class but lately emerged from industrial slavery into commercial enterprise—the class of "hustling" business men, of "live wires," of commercial club luminaries, of "drive" managers, of forward-lookers and right-thinkers—in brief, of third-rate Southerners inoculated with all the worst traits of the Yankee sharper One observes the curious effects of an old tradition of truculence upon a population now mere-

ly pushful and impudent, of an old tradition of chivalry upon a population now quite without imagination The old repose is gone The old romanticism is gone The philistinism of the new type of town-boomer Southerner is not only indifferent to the ideals of the Old South, it is positively antagonistic to them That philistinism regards human life, not as an agreeable adventure, but as a mere trial of rectitude and efficiency It is overwhelmingly utilitarian and moral It is inconceivably hollow and obnoxious What remains of the ancient tradition is simply a certain charming civility in private intercourse—often broken down, alas, by the hot rages of Puritanism, but still generally visible The Southerner, at his worst, is never quite the surly cad the Yankee is His sensitiveness may betray him into occasional bad manners, but in the main he is a pleasant fellow—hospitable, polite, good-humored, even jovial . . . But a bit absurd A bit pathetic

A MENCKEN CHRESTOMATHY (1949)

Aldous Huxley

ALDOUS HUXLEY (1894—) is a grandson of the Victorian biologist, Thomas Henry Huxley, a son of the distinguished editor and biographer, Leonard Huxley, and a brother of the zoologist and social philosopher, Julian Huxley. He was one of a brilliant group of undergraduates at Oxford and had intended to go into science but eye-trouble, it is said, turned him to writing.

Before he was thirty, brittle poems, essays, short stories and novels were flowing from his pen. *Antic Hay* remains one of the most striking novels of the disillusioned 1920's. People read Huxley avidly, thinking he was a cynic when he was really a satirist. They were amazed by his wide learning which was preparing the way for such a large-scale novel as *Point Counter Point*, for the anger of *Brave New World*, for the Christian Hindu philosophizing of *Ends and Means*, *Eyeless in Gaza*, and *The Perennial Philosophy*. Whatever one may think of this later non-violent asceticism, Huxley is always an amazingly literate and readable author, who stimulates even when he irritates.

There are those, like Somerset Maugham, who think that Huxley is more successful in the essay than in the novel form. Whether he writes on "Wordsworth in the Tropics" or "Tibet," on "Selected Snobberies" or on El Greco, on tragedy or music, he shakes us out of our smugness and ignorance. He closes his essay on "Comfort" in this way: "Comfort is a means to an end. The modern world seems to regard it as an end in itself, an absolute good. One day, perhaps, the earth will have been turned into one vast feather-bed, with man's body dozing on top of it and his mind underneath, like Desdemona, smothered."

numerous manifestations of the subtle and complicated vice of accidie Chaucer's discourse on it in the "Parson's Tale" contains a very precise description of this disastrous vice of the spirit. "Accidie," he tells us, "makith a man hevy, thoughtful and wrawe" It paralyses human will, "it forsloweth and forsluggeth" a man when ever he attempts to act From accidie comes dread to begin to work any good deeds, and finally wanhope, or despair On its way to ultimate wanhope, accidie produces a whole crop of minor sins, such as idleness, tardiness, *lachesse*, coldness, undevotion and "the synne of worldly sorrow, such as is cleped *tristitia*, that sleth man, as seith seint Poule" Those who have sinned by accidie find their everlasting home in the fifth circle of the Inferno They are plunged in the same black bog with the Wrathful, and their sobs and words come bubbling up to the surface

Fitti nel limo dicon "Tristi fummo
 nell' aer dolce che dal sol s' allegra,
 portando dentro accidioso fummo,
 Or ci attristiam nella belletta negra"
 Quest' inno si gorgolian nella strozza,
 chè dir nol posson con parola integra

Accidie did not disappear with the monasteries and the Middle Ages The Renaissance was also subject to it. We find a copious description of the symptoms of acedia in Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy* The results of the midday demon's machinations are now known as the vapours or the spleen To the spleen amiable Mr Matthew Green, of the Custom House, devoted those eight hundred octosyllables which are his claim to immortality For him it is a mere disease to be healed by a temperate diet

Hail water gruel, healing power,
 Of easy access to the poor,

by laughter, reading and the company of unaffected young ladies

visual impression into that mirror You're not a disembodied spirit yet—I hope”

And I go back and look again, and, sure enough, the strange-looking man I thought was walking just ahead of me in the reflection turns out to have been my own image all the time It makes a fellow stop and think, I can tell you

This almost masochistic craving to offend my own aesthetic sense by looking at myself and wincing also comes out when snapshots or class photographs are being passed around The minute someone brings the envelope containing the week's grist of vacation prints from the drugstore developing plant, I can hardly wait to get my hands on them I try to dissemble my eagerness to examine those in which I myself figure, but there is a greedy look in my eye which must give me away

The snapshots in which I do not appear are so much dross in my eyes, but I pretend that I am equally interested in them all

“This is very good of Joe,” I say, with a hollow ring to my voice, sneaking a look at the next print to see if I am in it

Ah! Here, at last, is one in which I show up nicely By “nicely” I mean “clearly” Try as I will to pass it by casually, my eyes rivet themselves on that corner of the group in which I am standing And then, when the others have left the room, I surreptitiously go through the envelope again, just to gaze my fill on the slightly macabre sight of Myself as others see me

In some pictures I look even worse than I had imagined On what I call my “good days,” I string along pretty close to form But day in and day out, in mirror or in photograph, there is always that slight shock of surprise which, although unpleasant, lends a tang to the adventure of peeking I never can quite make it seem possible that that is really Poor Little Me, the Little Me I know so well and yet who frightens me so when face to face

My only hope is that, in this constant metamorphosis which seems to be going on, a winning number may come up sometime if only for a day Just what the final outcome will be,

it is hard to predict I may settle down to a constant, plodding replica of Man-Mountain Dean in my old age, or change my style completely and end up as a series of Bulgarian peasant types I may just grow old along with Wimpy

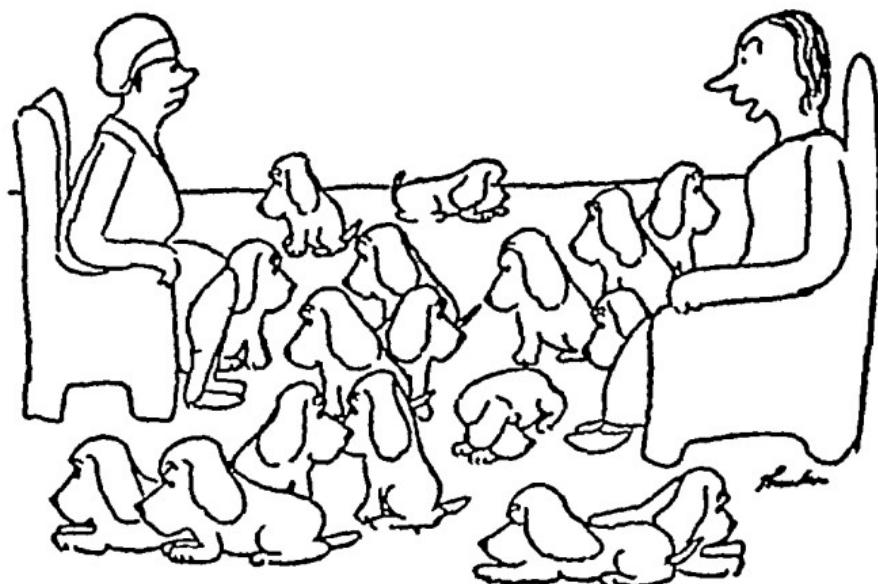
But whatever is in store for me, I shall watch the daily modulations with an impersonal fascination not unmixed with awe at Mother Nature's gift for caricature, and will take the bitter with the sweet and keep a stiff upper lip

As a matter of fact, my upper lip is pretty fascinating by itself, in a bizarre sort of way

AFTER 1903—WHAT?

process of being drawn, began to look like the head of a bed, so I made a bed out of it, put a man and wife in the bed, and stumbled onto the caption as easily and unexpectedly as the seal had stumbled into the bedroom.

The woman on top of the bookcase ("That's my first wife up there, and this is the *present* Mrs Harris") was originally designed to be a woman crouched on the top step of a stair-

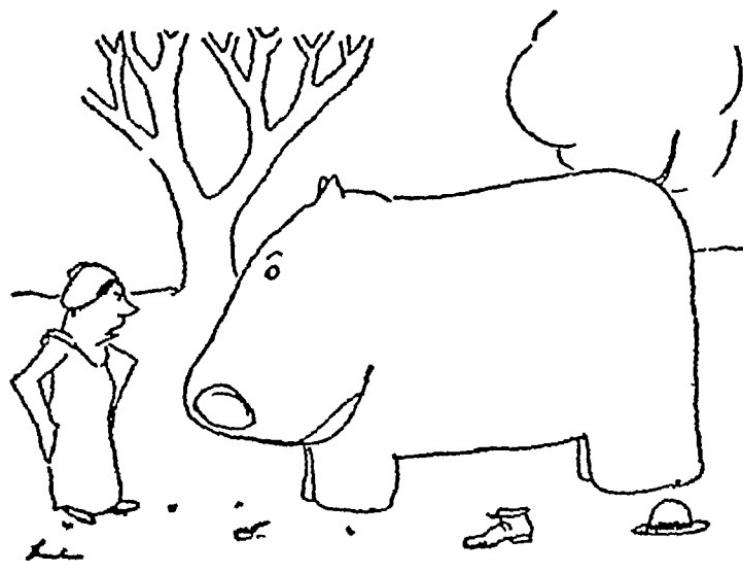


"The father belonged to some people who were driving through in a Packard."

case, but since the tricks and conventions of perspective and planes sometimes fail me, the staircase assumed the shape of a bookcase and was finished as such, to the surprise and embarrassment of the first Mrs Harris, the present Mrs Harris, the lady visitor, Mr Harris and me. Before *The New Yorker* would print the drawing, they phoned me long distance to inquire whether the first Mrs Harris was alive or dead or stuffed. I replied that my taxidermist had advised me that you cannot stuff a woman, and that my physician had informed me that a dead lady cannot support herself on all fours. This

meant, I said, that the first Mrs Harris was unquestionably alive

The man riding on the other man's shoulders in the bar ("For the last time, you and your horsie get away from me and stay away!") was intended to be standing alongside the irate speaker, but I started his head up too high and made it too small, so that he would have been nine feet tall if I had

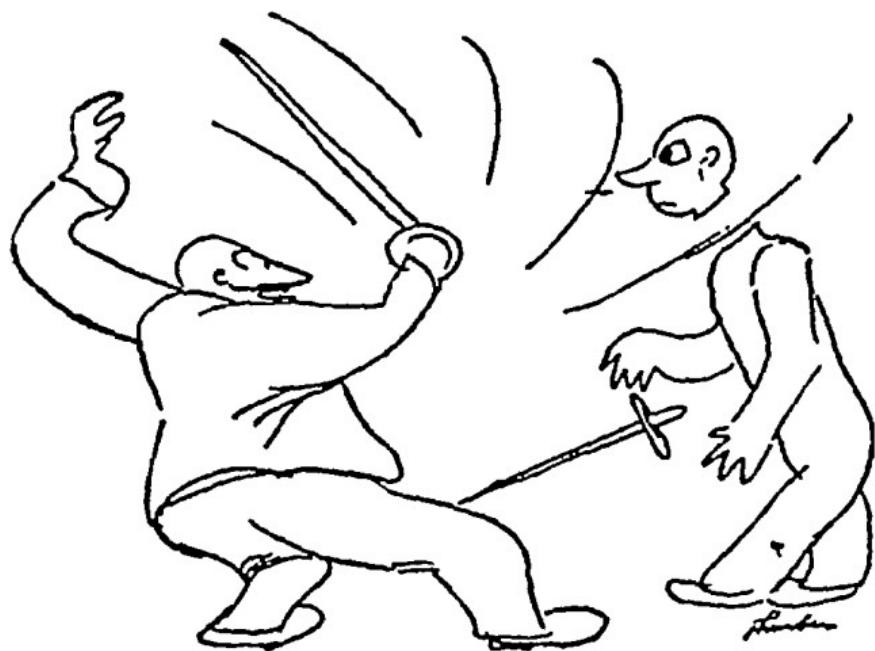


"What have you done with Dr Millmoss?"

slanted his body that way. It was but the work of thirty-seconds to put him on another man's shoulders. As simple, if you like, as complicated as that. The psychological factors which may be present here are, as I have indicated, acute and confused. Personally, I like Dr Claude Thornhill's theory of the Deliberate Accident or Conditioned Mis-

category No 3 is perhaps a variant of Category No 2, they may even be identical. The does in "The Father

belonged to some people who were driving through in a "Packard" were drawn as a captionless spot, and the interior with figures just sort of grew up around them. The hippopotamus in "What have you done with Dr. Millmoss?" was drawn to amuse my small daughter. Something about the creature's expression when he was completed convinced me that he had recently eaten a man. I added the hat and pipe.



"Touché!"

and Mrs. Millmoss, and the caption followed easily enough. Incidentally, my daughter, who was 2 years old at the time identified the beast immediately "That's a hippotomanus," she said. *The New Yorker* was not so smart. They described the drawing for their files as follows "Woman with strange animal." *The New Yorker* was nine years old at the time.

Category No. 4 is represented by perhaps the best known of some fifteen drawings belonging to this special grouping.

nights New York should have destroyed itself long ago, from panic or fire or rioting or failure of some vital supply line in its circulatory system or from some deep labyrinthine short circuit. Long ago the city should have experienced an insoluble traffic snarl at some impossible bottleneck. It should have perished of hunger when food lines failed for a few days. It should have been wiped out by a plague starting in its slums or carried in by ships' rats. It should have been overwhelmed by the sea that licks at it on every side. The workers in its myriad cells should have succumbed to nerves, from the fearful pall of smoke-fog that drifts over every few days from Jersey, blotting out all light at noon and leaving the high offices suspended, men groping and depressed, and the sense of world's end. It should have been touched in the head by the August heat and gone off its rocker.

Mass hysteria is a terrible force, yet New Yorkers seem always to escape it by some tiny margin. They sit in stalled subways without claustrophobia, they extricate themselves from panic situations by some lucky wisecrack, they meet confusion and congestion with patience and grit—a sort of perpetual muddling through. Every facility is inadequate—the hospitals and schools and playgrounds are overcrowded, the express highways are feverish, the unimproved highways and bridges are bottlenecks, there is not enough air and not enough light, and there is usually either too much heat or too little. But the city makes up for its hazards and its deficiencies by supplying its citizens with massive doses of a supplementary vitamin—the sense of belonging to something unique, cosmopolitan, mighty, and unparalleled.

To an outlander a stay in New York can be and often is a series of small embarrassments and discomforts and disappointments not understanding the waiter, not being able to distinguish between a sucker joint and a friendly saloon, riding the wrong subway, being slapped down by a bus driver for asking an innocent question, enduring sleepless nights when the street noises fill the bedroom. Tourists make for New York, particularly in summertime—they swarm all over the Statue of Liberty (where many a resident of the town has never

the way a red rose turns bluish as it wilts. The café is a sanctuary. The waiters are ageless and they change not. Nothing has been modernized. Notre Dame stands guard in its travel poster. The coffee is strong and full of chicory, and good.

Walk the Bowery under the elevated railway at night and all you feel is a sort of cold guilt. Touched for a dime, you try to drop the coin and not touch the hand, because the hand is dirty, you try to avoid the glance, because the glance accuses. This is not so much personal menace as universal—the cold menace of unresolved human suffering and poverty and the advanced stages of the disease alcoholism. On a summer night the drunks sleep in the open. The sidewalk is a free bed, and there are no lice. Pedestrians step along and over and around the still forms as though walking on a battlefield among the dead. In doorways, on the steps of the savings bank, the bums lie sleeping it off. Standing sentinel at each sleeper's head is the empty bottle from which he drained his release. Wedged in the crook of his arm is the paper bag containing his things. The glib barker on the sight-seeing bus tells his passengers that this is the "street of lost souls," but the Bowery does not think of itself as lost, it meets its peculiar problem in its own way—plenty of gin mills, plenty of flop-houses, plenty of indifference, and always, at the end of the line Bellevue.

A block or two east and the atmosphere changes sharply. In the slums are poverty and bad housing, but with them the reassuring sobriety and safety of family life. I head east along Rivington. All is cheerful and filthy and crowded. Small shops overflow onto the sidewalk, leaving only half the normal width for passers-by. In the candid light from unshaded bulbs gleam watermelons and lingerie. Families have fled the hot rooms upstairs and have found relief on the pavement. They sit on orange crates, smoking, relaxed, congenial. This is the nightly garden party of the vast Lower East Side—and on the whole they are more agreeable-looking hot-weather groups than some you see in bright canvas deck chairs on green lawns in country circumstances. It is folksy here with the smell of

warm flesh and squashed fruit and fly-bitten filth in the gutter, and cooking

At the corner of Lewis, in the playground behind the wire fence, an open-air dance is going on—some sort of neighborhood affair, probably designed to combat delinquency. Women push baby carriages in and out among the dancers, as though to exhibit what dancing leads to at last. Overhead, like banners decorating a cotillion hall, stream the pants and bras from the pulley lines. The music stops, and a beautiful Italian girl takes a brush from her handbag and stands under the street lamp brushing her long blue-black hair till it shines. The cop in the patrol car watches sullenly.

The Consolidated Edison Company says there are eight million people in the five boroughs of New York, and the company is in a position to know. As in every dense community, virtually all races, all religions, all nationalities are represented. Population figures are shifty—they change almost as fast as one can break them down. It is safe to say that about two million of New York's eight million are Jews—roughly one in four. Among this two million who are Jewish are, of course, a great many nationalities—Russian, German, Polish, Rumanian, Austrian, a long list. The Urban League of Greater New York estimates that the number of Negroes in New York is about 700,000. Of these, about 500,000 live in Harlem, a district that extends northward from 110th Street. The Negro population has increased rapidly in the last few years. There are half again as many Negroes in New York today as there were in 1940. There are about 230,000 Puerto Ricans living in New York. There are half a million Irish, half a million Germans. There are 900,000 Russians, 150,000 English, 400,000 Poles, and there are quantities of Finns and Czechs and Swedes and Danes and Norwegians and Latvians and Belgians and Welsh and Greeks, and even Dutch, who have been here from away back. It is very hard to say how many Chinese there are. Officially there are 12,000 but there are many Chinese who are in New York illegally and who don't like census takers.

The collision and the intermingling of these millions of foreign-born people representing so many races, creeds and nationalities, make New York a permanent exhibit of the phenomenon of one world. The citizens of New York are tolerant not only from disposition but from necessity. The city has to be tolerant, otherwise it would explode in a radio-active cloud of hate and rancor and bigotry. If the people were to depart even briefly from the peace of cosmopolitan intercourse, the town would blow up higher than a kite. In New York smolders every race problem there is, but the noticeable thing is not the problem but the inviolate truce. Harlem is a city in itself, and being a city Harlem symbolizes segregation, yet Negro life in New York lacks the more conspicuous elements of Jim Crowism. Negroes ride subways and buses on terms of equality with whites, but they have not yet found that same equality in hotels and restaurants. Professionally, Negroes get on well in the theater, in music, in art, and in literature, but in many fields of employment the going is tough. The Jim Crow principle lives chiefly in the housing rules and customs. Private owners of dwellings legally can, and do, exclude Negroes. Under a recent city ordinance, however, apartment buildings that are financed with public moneys or that receive any tax exemption must accept tenants without regard to race, color, or religion.

To a New Yorker the city is both changeless and changing. In many respects it neither looks nor feels the way it did twenty-five years ago. The elevated railways have been pulled down, all but the Third Avenue. An old-timer walking up Sixth past the Jefferson Market jail misses the railroad, misses its sound, its spotted shade, its little aerial stations, and the tremor of the thing. Broadway has changed in aspect. It used to have a discernible bony structure beneath its loud bright surface but the signs are so enormous now, the buildings and shops and hotels have largely disappeared under the neon lights and letters and the frozen-custard façade. Broadway is a custard street with no frame supporting it. In Greenwich Village the light is thinning, big apartments have come in, bor-

dering the Square, and the bars are mirrored and chromed. But there are still in the Village the lingering traces of poesy, Mexican glass, hammered brass, batik, lamps made of whisky bottles, first novels made of fresh memories—the old Village with its alleys and ratty one-room rents catering to the erratic needs of those whose hearts are young and gay.

Grand Central Terminal has become honky-tonk, with its extra-dimensional advertising displays and its tendency to adopt the tactics of a travel broker. I practically lived in Grand Central at one period (it has all the conveniences and I had no other place to stay) and the great hall seemed to me one of the more inspiring interiors in New York, until advertisements for Lastex and Coca-Cola got into the temple.

All over town the great mansions are in decline. Schwab's house facing the Hudson on Riverside is gone. Gould's house on Fifth Avenue is an antique shop. Morgan's house on Madison Avenue is a church administration office. What was once the Fahnestock house is now Random House. Rich men nowadays don't live in houses, they live in the attics of big apartment buildings and plant trees on the setbacks, hundreds of feet above the street.

There are fewer newspapers than there used to be, thanks somewhat to the late Frank Munsey. One misses the *Globe*, the *Mail*, the *Herald*, and to many a New Yorker life has never seemed the same since the *World* took the count.

Police now ride in radio prowl cars instead of gumshoeing around the block swinging their sticks. A ride in the subway costs ten cents, and the seats are apt to be dark green instead of straw yellow. Men go to saloons to gaze at televised events instead of to think long thoughts. It is all very disconcerting. Even parades have changed some. The last triumphal military procession in Manhattan simply filled the city with an ominous and terrible rumble of heavy tanks.

The slums are gradually giving way to the lofty housing projects—high in stature, high in purpose, low in rent. There are a couple of dozen of these new developments scattered around, each is a city in itself (one of them in the Bronx accommodates twelve thousand families), sky acreage hitherto

untitled, lifting people far above the street, standardizing their sanitary life giving them some place to sit other than an orange crate Federal money, state money, city money, and private money have flowed into these projects Banks and insurance companies are in back of some of them Architects have turned the buildings slightly on their bases, to catch more light In some of them, rents are as low as eight dollars a month a room Thousands of new units are still needed and will eventually be built, but New York never quite catches up with itself, is never in equilibrium In flush times the population mushrooms and the new dwellings sprout from the rock Come bad times and the population scatters and the lofts are abandoned and the landlord withers and dies

New York has changed in tempo and in temper during the years I have known it There is greater tension, increased irritability You encounter it in many places, in many faces The normal frustrations of modern life are here multiplied and amplified—a single run of a crosstown bus contains, for the driver enough frustration and annoyance to carry him over the edge of sanity the light that changes always an instant too soon the passenger that hangs on the shut door, the truck that blocks the only opening, the coin that slips to the floor, the question asked at the wrong moment There is greater tension and there is greater speed Taxis roll faster than they rolled ten years ago—and they were rolling fast then Hackmen used to drive with verve now they sometimes seem to drive with desperation toward the ultimate tip On the West Side Highway, approaching the city, the motorist is swept along in a trance—a sort of fever of inescapable motion goaded from behind, hemmed in on either side, a mere chip in a millrace

The city has never been so uncomfortable, so crowded so tense Money has been plentiful and New York has responded Restaurants are hard to get into businessmen stand in line for a Schrafft's luncheon as meekly as idle men used to stand in sour lines (Prosperity creates its bread lines, the same as depression) The lunch hour in Manhattan has been shoved ahead half an hour, to 12 00 or 12 30, in the hopes of beat-

ing the crowd to a table Everyone is a little emptier at quitting time than he used to be Apartments are festooned with No Vacancy signs There is standing-room-only in Fifth Avenue buses, which once reserved a seat for every paying guest The old double-deckers are disappearing—people don't ride just for the fun of it any more

At certain hours on certain days it is almost impossible to find an empty taxi and there is a great deal of chasing around after them You grab a handle and open the door, and find that some other citizen is entering from the other side Doormen grow rich blowing their whistles for cabs, and some doormen belong to no door at all—merely wander about through the streets, opening cabs for people as they happen to find them By comparison with other less hectic days, the city is uncomfortable and inconvenient, but New Yorkers temperamentally do not crave comfort and convenience—if they did they would live elsewhere

The subtlest change in New York is something people don't speak much about but that is in everyone's mind The city, for the first time in its long history, is destructible A single flight of planes no bigger than a wedge of geese can quickly end this island fantasy, burn the towers, crumble the bridges, turn the underground passages into lethal chambers, cremate the millions The intimation of mortality is part of New York now in the sound of jets overhead, in the black headlines of the latest edition

All dwellers in cities must live with the stubborn fact of annihilation in New York the fact is somewhat more concentrated because of the concentration of the city itself, and because, of all targets, New York has a certain clear priority In the mind of whatever perverted dreamer might loose the lightning, New York must hold a steady irresistible charm

It used to be that the Statue of Liberty was the signpost that proclaimed New York and translated it for all the world Today Liberty shares the role with Death Along the East River, from the razed slaughterhouses of Turtle Bay, as though in a race with the spectral flight of planes, men are carving

out the permanent headquarters of the United Nations—the greatest housing project of them all In its stride, New York takes on one more interior city, to shelter, this time, all governments, and to clear the slum called war New York is not a capital city—it is not a national capital or a state capital But it is by way of becoming the capital of the world The building, as conceived by architects, will be cigar boxes set on end Traffic will flow in a new tunnel under First Avenue, Forty-seventh Street will be widened (and if my guess is any good), trucks will appear late at night to plant tall trees surreptitiously, their roots to mingle with the intestines of the town Once again the city will absorb, almost without showing any sign of it, a congress of visitors It has already shown itself capable of stashing away the United Nations—a great many of the delegates have been around town during the past couple of years, and the citizenry has hardly caught a glimpse of their coattails or their black Homburgs

This race—this race between the destroying planes and the struggling Parliament of Man—It sticks in all our heads The city at last perfectly illustrates both the universal dilemma and the general solution, this riddle in steel and stone is at once the perfect target and the perfect demonstration of non-violence, of racial brotherhood, this lofty target scraping the skies and meeting the destroying planes halfway, home of all people and all nations, capital of everything, housing the deliberations by which the planes are to be stayed and their errand forestalled

A block or two west of the new City of Man in Turtle Bay there is an old willow tree that presides over an interior garden It is a battered tree, long suffering and much climbed, held together by strands of wire but beloved of those who know it In a way it symbolizes the city life under difficulties, growth against odds, sap-rise in the midst of concrete, and the steady reaching for the sun Whenever I look at it nowadays, and feel the cold shadow of the planes, I think "This must be saved, this particular thing, this very tree" If it were to go, all would go—this city, this mischievous and marvelous monument which not to look upon would be like death

Regrets

IF "literature is the art of making sacrifices," the art of selection and ruthless exclusion, as Flaubert insisted, anthology-making is also a painful process for the desperate editor.

I have already made some apologies and explanations. Popular scientific articles, no matter how brilliant and informative, do not fit into our general scheme. But it was more painful to leave out the long line of nature writers from Izaak Walton and Gilbert White down to the present. The wound is assuaged a little by passages from Thoreau and Peattie. The chief loss, from my point of view, is W. H. Hudson.

A copy of *The Gentle Reader* or *Among Friends* by Samuel McChord Crothers now reminds me of my mother reading those charming collections to my father. If Crothers' "The Hundred Worst Books" and "In Praise of Politicians" were not so long I would include them from filial piety.

In college during the first World War I came upon *Iconoclasts*, *Egoists*, *The Pathos of Distance*, and one or two other volumes by James Gibbons Huneker. I did not know that he had been a gad-fly, an infectious influence, a stirrer-up of enthusiasms, a bridge between the United States and Europe for two decades. Huneker should be here but I cannot find any single review, article or essay that does justice to his enormous zest and refreshing taste. One may do better perhaps by reading Mr. Mencken's lively introduction to his large volume of selections from Huneker.

In that wonderful morning newspaper, *The New York World*, one could read in the twenties Heywood Broun's column, "It Seems to Me," and William Bolitho's "Camera Ob-

scura," and there has been no such newspaper page since Whether Broun wrote on Sherlock Holmes or the recent visit of the Queen of Roumania, on the six day bicycle race or social disaster, he had his inimitable touch Bolitho, who was born in South America and roughly reared in Europe, brought a different perspective to his meditative sketches of New York, of America, in the Prohibition era The brilliant Bolitho died at thirty-nine, Broun at fifty-one—and I regret that they are not represented here

John Jay Chapman (1862-1933) would almost certainly be here if I knew him better As for Christopher Morley, it is probably sheer chance that I am not one of his countless followers, for he still idolizes Conrad and has Lamb and Hazlitt in his veins And similar apologies to H M Tomlinson, and the shades of Hilaire Belloc and George Orwell The confession could go on indefinitely—only to be arrested by another book Looking back on this one I feel mighty good And I hope that feeling is still shared by the affectionate instigator, Herb Alexander

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